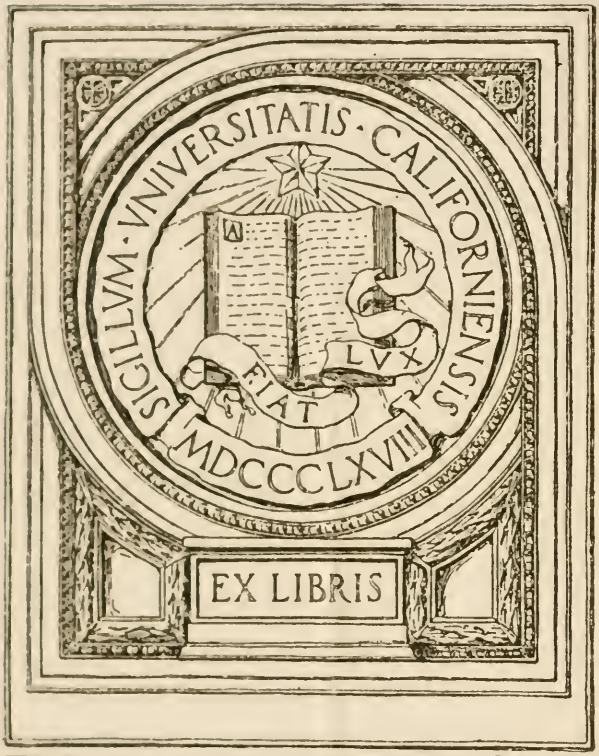
THE HEROINE IN BRONZE

JAMES·LANE ·ALLEN·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THE HEROINE IN BRONZE

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THE HEROINE IN BRONZE

OR

A PORTRAIT OF A GIRL

A Pastoral of the City

BY

JAMES LANE ALLEN

AUTHOR OF

'THE KENTUCKY CARDINAL,' 'THE CHOIR INVISIBLE,' ETC.

MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED

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TO

I. F. M.

There is no other healing for love, O Nicias, either as an ointment or as a plaster, except the Muses. But agreeable and desirable though this remedy be in the lives of men, it is not easy to procure.—THEOCRITUS.

I loved you, damsel, the first time you came . . . to pluck hyacinths on the mountain with me as your guide. I could not leave off loving you the first time I beheld you. I could not leave off loving you afterwards. And I cannot leave off loving you now.—THEOCRITUS.

Dedication

TO YOUTH—ITS KINGDOM AND IDEALS

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CHAPTER I

A FEW years ago, in the budding month of June, one morning as the east began to flush rose-coloured with the dawn, I awoke; and upon awaking, discovered that I had an original story to give to the world—a perfect love-story of a youthful pair.

Now a gift is often a galling load: alike to him who carries it and to him on whose shoulders it is laid and left. But the gift of a good story burdens neither and lightens both. It is perhaps the only kindness that may always be safely offered to an enemy and to a stranger and to a friend; it is surely the only traveller that, starting anywhere, can journey everywhere without cost or risk; invigorating all minds without losing its vigour; emptying laughter and tears round the whole earth, yet keeping

them unwasted like a cloud. The world never has too many good stories; it is perpetually impatient for one more; it would be ready—and grateful—to listen to mine.

This reflection encouraged me. The several pulplike romances on which I had first persuaded myself that I should help to nourish mankind had not sustained that favourable estimate of their importance; mankind had not shared my view that those works held any of the nutriment of its delight. It had nibbled, but had decided not to partake, and had even left it to me to express the necessary regrets: I duly expressed them.

I was pleased, moreover, that my story had come to me in the early hours of the morning while as yet the day had not a footstep on it, not a finger-print, not a breath that might be a stain. For the work itself, as I have intimated, was about youth—life's dawn; the white dews of nature still lay over it, over that land of youth.

And then, finally, the story was so wholly mine and of myself. I had not had the ill-luck to find my treasure in the neighbourhood of some other man's treasure, just outside the

covers of his book, just beyond the range of his conversation. I had not been racked with the need of a story, had not been hunting for one through the forest of my brain as the beast must find within his jungle some quarry to keep him from starving. I had not done anything. It came as our best things, greatest things, always come, not by outside compulsion, but by growth within and as the silent rewards of what we ourselves are, the inevitable rewards of what we are. The sculptor sometimes quietly awakens with his most human statue; the musician with greater music; the poet with a finer song; the painter with a fairer country; the scientist with some vaster law of the earth or of the air or of the stars—all as the rewards of what they themselves are. I, an unknown writer of a few unsuccessful tales, a youth two seasons out of college and dowered as to fortune with one dry rectangle of university parchment and twenty-two green years, I, by name Donald Clough, and by nature an optimist and by hope a philosopher of the heart,—fired with the wish to create a work which might by its shape and substance touch the unchangingly sound heart of

mankind and thus become a classic,—I, after failures and disappointments, awoke triumphantly with a little masterpiece. If any masterpiece may be called little, if so great a matter as perfection can have aught to do with so small a thing as size.

The immediate resolve was to carry the tidings of this good fortune to her whose approval of my work, whose approval of me, meant my happiness. The masterpiece as soon as finished would itself go to her as yet another offering. I myself had been but an offering from the first day I beheld her, that perfect day of the June previous, with its balmy airs and blue sky, on her crowded, sunny college campus, on the day of her distinguished graduation, when she, mounting with her elect sisterhood, all in white, a rose-twined platform, had read to a delirious audience her finishing essay (the essay that finished me); when afterwards, descending from the platform and standing with bowed head—that exquisite head with the gold of dawn on it—she, Muriel Dunstan, had received from an impersonal president the diploma of her dismissal in honour and peace; and then

had been turned sorrowfully out of doors by all her old professors in a body, to enter alone the rougher pathways of young men. Most sorrowfully by the professor of English whose favourite brilliant pupil she had been: though this was not the reason why he was in love with her, after the masklike antique manner of professors sometimes. I charge him here that salaries are paid to professors for staid ideas, not wayward emotions; for their felicitous learning, not their unhappy leaning. Yet I salute him, too, with grovelling respect that if he leaned perilously toward her, he leaned like the Tower of Pisa—without falling: a human classic, rigid with his years.

Turned out of doors to enter alone the rougher pathways of young men! The young men were already there with their rougher pathways; for a throng of them had quickly gathered about her, that sure and favourable sign. As one of that contesting group I was from that day forth none too gentle in trying to push the others out of the way; you may rest satisfied that they greatly rejoiced to push me. In vain for all of us! As to myself, with

my rustic gifts of nature, she had, as time went on, not been disdainful exactly; to the contrary, she had distantly scrutinized these as though she might so far be rather well pleased. But beyond that point she had demeaned herself as one who, looking you solemnly, searchingly, in the eyes, shakes her head with a baffling smile and demands more, far more, immeasurably more. Thus between her and me life had for some time been at a standstill,—at least love had,—all because I had not the needful gifts to scatter at her feet; and when love stands still and life goes on, the two perforce soon get too far apart.

Please do not admonish me that love is not to be won by gifts. Love is not to be won with anything else. There is never any question between any two but the same question: whether one must needs surrender one's self to another in exchange for what one's desire cannot do without. The barter may be very low, the barter may be very high; but it is always barter, barter, barter. All our sublimities even have to go to the highest bidder in the market-place of ideals; we trade

in our souls as we sell apples for laces and wines for shoes.

This was the exact ground for my present hope that the story might bring me nearer the end of my toilsome, wearisome journey toward her heart. It was the best gift I had yet been able to carry to her, for it was the best proof of what I myself *was* that very morning; and of course what I was that morning was proof in its turn of what I had been all the mornings of my life. I hoped, therefore, that she would accept it as the first real token of what, with added years, I might become in my profession —I, aged enough for a full-grown lover, but not mature enough for a full-grown author.

In truth, of late, after some tenderer partings I had left her, persuaded that at heart she had already accepted me as a lover and was holding back only because the lover of some twenty-two years could furnish her no assurance of what he might be accomplishing as a man at thirty-five. She, planning prudently and proudly far ahead, was considering whether by that time or at some earlier or later time she might not find herself bound for life to a man who was

neither a lover nor anything else. Alas, those women : can there be many of them !

I exulted in this challenge of hers : I desired that I be challenged to nothing less. But my difficulty was that I could not outstrip time, I could not advance more rapidly than nature herself. The proof of what I could do in my profession must be unfolded little by little—piece by piece—with sweat and toil—through defeat often—through patience and consecration always. I could no more drive my mind through the wall of future years, and drag from beyond them the deeds that belonged there, than a man, standing at the eastern base of a mountain, could thrust his arm through the mountain and gather gold on its western slope.

She knew this ; and there was some beautiful justice in her ; and I think as she pondered her perfectly natural caution and my perfectly natural helplessness to satisfy it, I think that under the leading of her heart—though she had spoken no word about this—she had given way far enough to narrow her demand to a single requirement : I must at least show *one* sign, one valid, solid, sweeping sign, that I would carry

off in my profession some due share of its honours and not soon after marriage begin to drain toward a wife the long dark sewer of a husband's failures.

Let me put this matter in yet another way. It is very important and I wish it to be made perfectly clear. Therefore I shall employ a kind of parable of the fields because I like their language best, the simple honest forthright speech of the fields. She did not require, then, that at this outset of my career I should lead her as to some mountain-top from which she could descry the distant gold of my autumn harvest; she did not even ask for the sight of the full-stalked summer green. But she did demand that I reach down where I stood on my mountain of hope and pluck for her a handful of vigorous young wheat-blades as they show in early spring the promise of the ended season. Then perhaps she would be ready to let me know whether upon this evidence she would wed April—and risk September.

This morning I believed that I had in my hand April's promise—my new story, my first masterwork. The thought robed the world

with joy. This day might bring about my betrothal. At once it became solemn and beautiful beyond all my days.

As I sprang out of bed with the belief that happy things were just ahead and that I might prepare myself for them, I was not even content to take my bath in one of those scant allowances of porcelain which are sometimes assigned to the less important tenants in a sumptuous New York apartment building. Too poor myself to keep a valet, I was rich enough to retain something better—my faithful servitor Imagination : ever at my elbow to do for me what I could not do for myself ; its duty being to better my lot in the world as often as I wished and as much as I might crave. I now invoked Imagination ; and then I took my bath as one who, with an eager start, leaps at the surf's edge from some high rock, soft to his bare feet with living moss and fragrant to him with wild rose and pine—as one who with strong young limbs leaps from such a rock, clear-bodied in the morning light, and dives deep into blue ocean.

From this imaginary bath rather than the actual one, this boundless primeval bath, I

emerged dripping and aglow with its cold purity.

When I descended to the street, ten floors down, I found that my earlier fancied union with the sea was succeeded by a kind of reality. With the deep breathing which is instinctive as we step into the open air, the smell of fresh brine swept into my nostrils ; its moisture began to settle on my moustache and face ; the ripple of it seemed to pass into the full-running channels of my blood. For during the night a vast vapour from the bay had overspread the city ; and now this vapour hung suspended like some finest dew-cloth spun far out on silver and azure sea : a vast dew-cloth, floating, drifting, invisible in a crystal ether. And falling through this cool, clear, dew-wet air came the splendours of the morning sun.

I could but stand still in the street for a moment to drink it all in, to acknowledge the glory of it with my adoring soul, my thrilled body. What a masterpiece of a day ! And it was the birthday of what I hoped would be a masterwork in my hand. I made good omen for myself out of the benign aspects of the

universe ; I let my mind dwell waveringly upon man's old fond belief that his fairer deed finds a fairer day.

Then, thus assured that all within and without was auspicious, I started eagerly across the city in a south-easterly direction toward her home.

CHAPTER II

She lived within less than half a block of Fifth Avenue, that long, hard, stately, palace-crowded, diamond-bedusted, world-weary road—the *Via Dolorosa* of great cities. And her residence was not far southward from Central Park—that Arcady of Nature in town: slopes of green-sward for dances of the children of the earth; thickets for the nests and songs of the children of the air; turf scattered plenteously over with dews and rains—jewels that do not fret the fingers or the mind; trees with wild thorns which pierce no brow, such thorns as may strike through the down of pillows; quiet waters into which the stars flash—surer lights to go by than any that mirrors can reflect from chandeliers; paths that lead to shade for young lovers who grow faint in the sun; and many a resting-place for the

worker and for the old who are past their work.

Thus Fifth Avenue and Central Park were the figurative boundaries of her existence, the frontiers of the two worlds of her spirit—society and nature. She dwelt near both worlds; and she entered both; she entered both freely and returned from both—free; too free for my peace!

From this description you will understand that her home—that is, her father's residence, over which she presided, her famous mother being dead many years,—you will understand that her home stood in perhaps the most beautiful, the most celebrated, and the most fashionable quarter of the city. A house that can stand where it stood has to be a strong house.

It showed its strength still further by the prominence it took in a street of more modern houses whose partition walls conjoined. In the long block of these to the east and to the west, it, much the oldest of them, stood apart in its own yard. And it stood there with authority. The others wore the air of having won a shallow

foothold by rude and hasty force; they suggested that they were achievements in worldly competition. Here and there a doorstep seemed ready to fawn at the right footstep or to insult the wrong one; here and there windows looked out at the world, prepared to smirk or to frown; and plainly certain chimney-tops were too rigid to bow or too obsequious to do so—like hats quickly jerked off when the mightier pass. But her home reigned amid these with the quietness of unconcern, as if knowing that its foundations were built below the crumbling reefs of old and new, below the passing and repassing tides of New York names and fashions and fortunes. It did not so much appear to stand in the city as to grow in the soil, on one of the last visible vestiges of lower Manhattan Island; and you responded to it as you might to an unrulable oak which knows itself to be legal heir to its share of the forest and demands space for the freedom of its boughs.

It affected me powerfully because it did stand aloof. The rows of buildings soldered together, wall by wall, annoyed me, a green country boy, much as if I had seen a neighbourhood of

farmers pinioned together by their shoulders. I could no more have wished my home, when I should have one, to be welded to any other man's home than I could have planned that my ribs should be nailed to his ribs. Often, as I looked at solid blocks of houses, I twisted and writhed to get loose with sun and air and space for life, growth, independence. This house satisfied my craving : it flourished unsupported ; nothing else held it up ; it seemed to say to the others : I stand on my foundation, stand on yours. If you cannot stand alone, fall alone.

And its humanized countenance ! Have you in remembrance at the moment some strong, middle-aged, vanished face, in the wrinkles of which lurked gentle humours and moods of fun, but over which had settled one expression of mellowed dignity before the world ? This, for me, was quite the hallowed eloquence of its look. By some train of suggestion, possibly by some resemblance it bore to another house now dim and distant, and lost to me with those who once dwelt there, the first sight of it brought back the memory of a middle-aged face—the most loved face in the world—strong, but with

innocent humours peeping from behind the ravages of the years, and resting over it one expression of brooding tenderness, a kind of indestructible peace.

Into this mystery of remembrance and resemblance I cannot go deeper here. I only know that from the first I liked the house because of earlier things in my own heart; because she had been born there and had passed her life there, with absences for sessions at college and for summers of travel; because it still moulded her as its pliant mistress; and because, in fine, I was making love to her in it and trying to entice her out of it. Beyond question this was why I loved it most: that I was trying to induce her to leave it.

Please give some attention to details. A broad strip of yard extended along the eastern and the western side, and there was a broader strip at the rear. The stone steps in front descended to the street, but even on each side of the steps there was a narrow strip of yard. At one boundary of the enclosure there was a driveway entrance to the stables, and a servants' gate; and here also around the feet of the

horses and the dogs, of the coachman and the footman, of the butler and the valet, of the maids and the cook, even around the issuing feet of these, there were little plots of priceless green. Each of those tiny expanses of grass, if valued in terms of the Wall Street Mint, would have been as a small field of the cloth of gold. Here was a family that held on to the common grass and let the commoner gold go.

This grass, too, ensnared my affections. For it here becomes intrusive to inform you that New York City is not my birthplace. I came from a rich, wide-rolling, pastoral region several hundred miles away; and I had dwelt on a farm until I was grown, getting my education from a small college town a few miles distant. It was only two years before this that I had made my solitary way to the vast city,—America's London—a youth, a stranger, almost without money, without acquaintances, without influence, but with the determination to succeed in one of the most difficult of professions without any man's aid. I had not succeeded amazingly, and I was yet homesick. As I walked about the city—there being little else

to do—I carried with me a pair of eyes which alighted gladly upon any verdure. Any mere florist's window in spring decorated with boughs brought up torturing memories of native woods far away, beginning to bud and blossom. Any solitary tree on a sidewalk invited me, a summer day, to throw myself down under its round shade, look up at the infinite blue, and try to dream again the things that once were so easy when they were distant, but were now so difficult, being near.

A more noteworthy feature still of this much-studied home of hers.

With my habit of keeping eyes wide open on human life, I had made a small discovery in my limited travels ; and I always go in for my own discoveries. In some cities, as Washington and Boston and Baltimore, where the early influence of English architecture was decisive, a high stone wall, after the old English custom of aristocratic town houses, separates the family from the world. I had been much used to such walls, even in my little pastoral Southern town with its pure English tradition. But in New York City, where the Dutch did most of the

building and the British chiefly camped—and decamped,—this Anglo-Saxon stone wall does not stand. Aristocratic usage has adopted the iron fence barbed at the top — an array of black spears in front of the enclosure. If further seclusion is desired for the grounds, a hedge is planted inside this fence : of privet or of arbor-vitæ or of hemlock or of rhododendron.

There was such a fence, such a hedge, in front of her residence. The passer could not see the ground premises. But over the top of this hedge he might have noticed that one entire wall of the house was covered with a mighty vine which made its way upward, in masses of foliage thickly looped, about the windows. On an October day I have seen that wall of the house glow dark red like an oak in the autumn woods. And late one afternoon, when there was a blue haze in the city air and a grey sky and a chilliness, as I walked past with my eyes dubiously turned in that direction, I caught sight of her at one of her windows, standing quite still there, framed in the dark red autumn picture and looking down into the yard. That vision of her head and face with its gold and its

fairness was as an April glimpse of daffodils and lilies—brought forward to the winter's edge.

"At this moment," I mused, ill at ease about my own case, "she may be settling the fate of some one of us! Let her be thanked, at least, for being thoughtful about it!"

A more curious person, glancing over the hedge and fence, could further have seen the tops of evergreens and the roof of a vine-covered arbour. He might have thought such a grotto a concession to the artificial, with no more natural right to be there than a Swiss chalet for Marie Antoinette had artistic warrant to be transplanted to the forest of Versailles. It to him may have stood for the same species of mock rusticity that one finds in a landscape of Aubusson tapestry or in the lawn of a Watteau fan. But I am sure that it was a very simple and sincere place to her, because the yard had been her mother's plan, she told me; and her mother had been reared in the country and had never been weaned from it. I am sure there was naught artificial in it to her, but a double tenderness for this reason; and I certainly know that I myself found out something

very sincere in her nature from that very arbour. For after I had established my acquaintanceship well enough to be taken out of doors, one day she and I were walking there. It was sober twilight, and low overhead I suddenly heard the notes of a grackle alighting in the foliage. A few minutes before I had recognized the call of a starling as it descended out of the darkening air. I turned toward her :—

"Birds must drop in here for the night," I said. "As they migrate in spring and migrate in autumn and make a great encampment of Central Park, sometimes the thin edge of a flying squadron must drop down here to tent for a night and a day."

"They do stop here," she replied, evidently glad. "Sometimes from my window I hear them as they flutter in after dark ; and sometimes I hear them utter their farewells as they leave at dawn. Sometimes one may linger for a few days."

Then with a change of tone quite natural to her she added, with her eyes on the ground :—

"We are all birds of passage—we human beings. From somewhere — to somewhere.

Either flying from dawn and spring toward winter and night; or from night and winter toward spring and dawn. I think, toward Perpetual Spring."

There sounded the grave note in her. I had heard it first in her Commencement essay, and I shall never forget how it startled me. She there that June morning, in the great audience hall of her college, before that audience of old age so reverential to youth on such days, with that bold note of the immortal in her girlhood most musically, fearlessly, uttered it as from the hilltops of life's morning. Shall I ever forget, either, how that night, when I was at my own prayers, this spiritual flight of hers already toward eternity drew her mystically beside me, as though some day we should be together — we two — Donald Clough, Muriel Dunstan?

But do not misunderstand about her seriousness; it was not gloominess. Across the bright field of her consciousness lay that one slender dark bar — just that one. Perhaps a refrain of pathos caught from her mother whom she vividly remembered and whose life had ended

almost before girlhood itself. All the rest of her was luminous with joy and humour. And woe to you if you ever ran your head rashly into the general blaze of that humour! The uncertainty of when it might make its appearance, and the certainty that it was always there ready to appear! It got to be a kind of terror to every man of us! Not one of us in love with her but felt tremors for this reason. No man need be afraid of anything he can fight; but how can a man attack a girl's laughter at him! It bowls him over, once and for all. He may rise again, smiling, to face death; not to face her.

As further bearing on this subject of her humour — and also as still harping on the house!

After the yard-turf had stretched rearward a space it suddenly turned uncontrollably gay and burst into a garden. Not quite an Italian garden, not quite an American garden, not quite anything but itself. There were flower-beds, evergreens, and honeysuckles; and through these went a little ramble lined with dwarf-box. It was a dwarf ramble. But then there are

short rambles that can be long and long rambles that can be short: there is no criterion for rambles—it depends upon the ramblers. This ramble led to the remotest corner of the enclosure, where there was an iron filigree seat painted grey—an iron seat, cold and grey, very iron, very cold, very grey. The world calls such a contrivance a settee; I called this one a seat-two. To my limited knowledge it always did seat two; and there could have been no calculable motive for any one to sit there alone: unless to enjoy self-misery, as people sometimes do. But why bother about self-misery when you are free to enjoy other people's? I repeat that no one would have chosen to sit there alone. For in addition to the attractive qualities already enumerated, there arose from the four legs of this settee four iron grape-vines that trailed themselves across the bottom and up the back, profusely laden with bunches of very uncrushable, unbacchanalian grapes. They prodded a man in the back and ribs like mailed fists; and they administered the peace of cobblestones to him in other directions.

This wanton piece of outdoor machinery was

arranged behind shrubs and vines—not artfully. When one of her suitors sat there with her, he may not have been arranged artfully, but he made that impression ; he conveyed that idea to the hostile beholder. I suspect that he made that impression upon *her*.

For though still a youth, I have long been a student of human nature, particularly of the human nature of the sex that possesses nearly all of it. Very old ladies and middle-aged ladies are beyond me—in time and in depth : what they are up to I shall never know. But the result of my study of the unaccountable beings of my own age is the belief that each of them puts her suitors to some same test. The suitors may never perceive what the test is : the investigatress knows admirably. And so far, I am sure, every girl is for weavings by day and unweavings by night, as the original Penelope. Of course you do not fall into the error of thinking there was never but one Penelope, and she a Greek and a married woman. The United States to-day is well peopled with young Penelopes who have never been to Greece and have never heard of the Ulysses : but they

expect to hear of husbands! The middle-aged classic Penelope unwove for a return; the youthful classic American weaves for an arrival.

I am sure that this settee was *her* test: one of her weavings—or castings. The caldron of the open sky there stewed the suitor to simplicity; that misshapen crucible of torture grilled him to the bones of candour. I know that one afternoon when I called on her and was invited to go out into the garden, as I drew near that farthest corner, I met one of the suitors hurrying away; he looked shrivelled, juiceless, drawn. There was iron to the rear of him—but he had the iron in him—the spear of her last word. I could almost see where it had gone through. I stepped quite to one side of the ramble that he might have the whole road of suffering to himself and wished him joy in his ruin. Thenceforth I called the bench the purgatory of the Last Judgment.

For me it possessed fewer terrors than any other spot of her domain, because I belong out of doors and speak best in the open. The worst impressions I had ever made upon her had been attributable to the house. Never have I feared

my species ; but I, a country boy, long could be awed by New York furniture. And there was furniture in her parlours that for a time nearly deprived me of the natural use of my limbs and my intelligence. The first wretched, clogged, futile, lying words of love I ever spoke to her were mumbled at her as I sat in a gilt chair with an embroidered fox at my back in full chase of an embroidered goose. She faced me on a gilt sofa with what at her back I know not—certainly not Sour Grapes ; and she sat under a large picture known as Botticelli's *Spring*—so she had informed me upon my anxious inquiry. But if that was the best that Botticelli ever knew of spring, he must have had a queer four seasons in his native country ; and he must have been used to see queer people : it is not remarkable that he should have painted them wandering about unemployed, puzzled, and low-spirited ; and tempered in their unmannerly garments neither to the wind, the Lord, nor the tailor. Ah, no ! Had she and I only been out in the real spring—on some warm, grassy slope of sun and shade ; near some wild grape whose blossoms scented the golden

air ; with a brook faintly heard running through banks of mint and violets ; and with the silken rustling of doves' wings audible amid the white blossoms of wild plum trees.

One last most important thing to tell you about this interminable yard ! But feel yourself honoured by being taken even into her yard if it brings you closer to her. Perhaps you would prefer that I should begin to say less and she begin to say more. But I speak while I may. When she appears upon the scene and begins to speak for herself, I shall vanish and speak for nobody.

A wall shut the yard in from the neighbour yard on one side, and where this wall met the front fence of iron spears there was formed a shaded nook. Perhaps in the whole city there was not an outdoor cranny where one who wished to read alone could be so undisturbed. Within a few yards of the passing world of realities, New York realities, you could ensconce yourself there, forget your surroundings, and make your journey to the ideal. If you had read in a story up to some point where you must stop to think, there was not a more

favourable spot in which to indulge that mood of dreaming and longing which it is the duty of every right kind of book to bring on.

The wall forming that nook of the yard is heavily covered with old ivy—not the Gray's *Elegy* kind of ivy, none of that ; that does well enough for bards. In this nook there was a marble seat after the manner of the ancient Greeks and Alma Tadema. Within arm's reach of the seat, at one end, flourished one of her mother's rose-bushes, which puts forth in the month of June. Never shall I forget that rose-bush or a quiet twilight when it flowered there and when Destiny stood behind it and touched a blossom.

Here, then, in this strong, proud, gentle, old mansion, in this yard with its seclusion and ramble and vines and seats, she lived with a household of four members. Her father, whom she playfully called the Commodore, was a banker, a clubman, and a patriot prominent in yachting circles. He had had something to do with the international challenges—not by way of wind and wave, but of mast and sail ; and he was

more concerned over the hardy adventurous Britisher who might some day lift *The America's* cup than over the hardy adventurous American who might sooner lift his daughter. There were two younger brothers off at their New England college, but at home for riotous intervals. There was an aunt, the Commodore's sister, a divorced dowager, who declared dividends on her alimony. She declared a great many more things than dividends. At my first dinner there, being her alimentary *attaché*, for the occasion, I received some kind of notion that she consisted chiefly of diamonds, opinions, and a succession of silver forks. Her opinions were to be classed rather with forks than with diamonds. They did not flash ; but they *were* solid and heavy ; and she took them up and laid them down, one by one, during the routine of courses, and made them generally useful to herself while feeding. I am sure that her ideas were forks. She, like the Commodore, was of aquatic habits ; but she went all the way across and inhabited the marshy watering-places of the Old World. I called her the Paludal Aunt ; and I still suspect that she was web-footed, and that if she had flapped her

arms briskly enough, she could have walked across a good-sized pond without wetting her ankles.

O Tempora! O Mores! O Nuptiæ Americanæ! O Paludes!

And thus with all that perfection of wordly estate, family ties scarcely existed in the household—a breakdown of the home-life in the too common New York way. The Commodore was absorbed in his banking, his clubs, his yachts, the traditions of *The America*. I was not unaware, however, that he kept a landward eye on me: as I kept a weather eye on him. The brothers were given over to their athletics, their studies, their fraternities; to their getting tapped and to doing some tapping for themselves. The aunt diverted herself with waters and foods and dividends and declarations. And thus she, daughter, sister, niece, and youthful mistress of them all, was left much to herself. Not like any of them, somewhat of a stranger among them.

Society, with its quick perception of what is fresh and charming, had advanced hungrily upon her from all directions during that first year of

her appearance in it. It encircled her to absorb her. In her social set were mothers who had known her mother; in her father's set were men with sons dangerous to me as rivals. Life spread out around her in every direction for her to walk a rose path across it whither she would; and always at the boundary waited the world's best. Sometimes at night the whole street would be blocked with the splendid motor cars and older-fashioned carriages of those who within the house rendered tribute to her. She bore her honours gladly. Yet I am sure that the deepest call of life did not reach her either from her family or from her social world.

And she managed her responsibilities so well that she contrived to reserve days when the house and the yard were left to quietness. These were the days for which I watched and waited. Then I found her alone, and more nearly reached her deepest hidden self. Now as to the manner in which these reserve days became known to me, you will be left to puzzle that out for yourself. But cherish the observation that whenever a pleasant thing is a secret to one young person, it becomes a secret to

another young person : only the old must have learned to keep their secrets.

An occurrence took place the spring of that same year a few weeks before the time of which I write.

It was about eleven o'clock, a brilliant morning in May : a day when youth is ready to drop work and laugh and dally. The red blood in it belongs to the blue sky and the golden sun ; it would willingly throw itself down beside the first wayside temptation and give a hard life-time for an hour of vagrant joy.

Being in that quarter of the city, I could not resist the temptation to turn my steps into her street ; I had gone thither determined not to resist. As I reached the fence with its hedge inside I stopped. The fragrance of the garden was wafted out to me on the sidewalk : the smell of privet blossoms, the aroma of box-boughs and pine-buds ; and rising from under the hedge, the odour of the strong moist earth. Recollection overcame me of spring days in my country. As though I were one cup of memory I filled this cup to the brim with draughts from her hedge and garden. Then the cup of

memory plotted a little for its future. The street was quiet, no one near; my audacious behaviour could not scandalize social conventions. Placing my face against the hedge, in a voice pitched not to be heard through the public atmosphere, but in a sheltered corner, I took the chance and murmured:—

"How do you do?"

I heard a book close quickly, and I heard laughter, surprised, amused laughter (though she did not know I heard). Then she replied as though she had not laughed and in a voice unconsciously lowered to go through hedges only:—

"Do you imagine I am going to talk to you there in the street?"

"At least, that is one remark! A non-committal remark, but still a remark."

"Why don't you come in?"

"Another remark! I await still others."

"There will not be any others. Only the one remark—why don't you come?"

"Well, then, I do not wish to come in."

"At least that is frank and civil."

"But there is a reason."

"Is the reason frank and civil—in the same way?"

"The reason is I would rather talk to you through a hedge—this one time!"

"Why through the hedge?"

"It reminds me of old pleasant days in my country and of a happy scene, when I was young, before I felt the weight of my years."

"The weight of your years must be very crushing! What had the hedge to do with the happy scene?"

"It was a calm summer day in my sweet-breathed land. There was a hedge of blackberry bushes growing along the fence. The berries hung soft like velvet; shining like jet; cooled by the thick shade. They melted on the tongue in purple juice—the iron of the vine. I was one side of the fence, he on the other. We were picking the berries for the jam of our mothers, but our mothers knew that Nature's buckets would be filled before theirs. That is all. We were picking them and eating them, and we were talking through the hedge; we were boys; we had no care; it was a happy time."

She did not reply at once, and when her voice reached me, it came freighted with what I believed to be the deep call of life to her ; from a world older yet younger than the city :—

"I wish I were away out in the country and it were a sweet day and I were picking and eating blackberries along a fence and some one I loved were talking to me!"

"That can be arranged for you. I can arrange it this summer."

"Now that is very kind of you! Very considerate! But don't you think I should rather arrange it for myself? Perhaps it might be wiser not to be passive in such a matter. But you said *he* ; why not *she*?"

"When it was *she*, I stayed on the same side of the fence!"

"Indeed! Oh, indeed! Did she get scratched by the briers?"

"Not intentionally."

"A New York brier might have scratched her intentionally. But all this is something new. Why did I never hear of this before? Did you—*love* her?"

"I thought I did."

"Don't you think so now?"

"Not now!"

"When did you begin to think you didn't, please?"

"The first time I saw—some one else."

"The *first* time! You seem to be very observing. How do you happen to be so observing?"

"An author has to be observing."

"*Are* you an author?"

"Well, an acorn is not an oak. And yet an acorn is an oak. I am the unstoppable acorn with the untoppable oak-like future."

"It must be very nice to be sure of yourself so far in advance. It must be very flattering to one's vanity to be an acorn and foresee itself an oak."

"It does help."

"So: as an author you are sure of yourself and sure of the future. But when it comes to being in love with a girl in a brier patch, you don't seem to be so positive. You can be one thing at one time and another thing at another time: life is all present and no future."

I thought the moment opportune to insert a question :—

"Are you sorry I changed? Do you regret that I do not love her now?"

"That is not a fit question to ask! And it is not fit to answer! And it is not the question at all! The point is that you *are*—changeable."

"I was only a little fellow!"

"Can't a big fellow change?"

"Not if a girl knows herself!"

"Indeed! And so I suppose girls have it as their destiny to lie awake of nights, trying to know themselves. Meanwhile the heroes who cause all the anxiety sleep. When they are so disposed, they call on us. If they are no longer held by us, but feel like wandering, it is proof that we have not attained the necessary self-knowledge. Is that what you tried to say?"

"That is what I said without trying. Still, you express my meaning far better than I could —with the carefulness of one who means to profit by experience!"

I think there was more laughter. Then came an inquiry.

This talk—the time and place and manner

of it—had its comic phase. She being where she was and I being where I was, it had its absurdity. Her inquiry showed that it was the absurdity she wished to have openly recognized between us :—

"Does any one hear? Is any one passing?"

"No one—but I require no witnesses. On Fifth Avenue I see a stage passing, and motor-cars and people in carriages; on Sixth Avenue I behold a surface car and an elevated train and delivery wagons and more pedestrians; let them pedester."

"Then we will go back for a moment to those wonderful August days: to the girl who ate the blackberries—on the same side of the fence. I did not wish any one to hear me speak of such a person! Was she a little fellow too?"

"About my height. A quarter of an inch lower."

"A quarter of an inch! Very observing again! You must have stood very close to her to observe that quarter of an inch!"

"I did."

"And the relative position did not annoy you?"

"Not in the least!"

"You speak as though it might have done the reverse, as though it might have pleased you surprisingly."

"It did!"

"It is fortunate for the world that you were not old enough to—to—kiss her!"

"I was!"

"Still, it is not to be supposed that you were swept off your feet by the impetuosity of your age!"

"Hundreds of times!"

"Now, that is strange! Hundreds of times! I wonder what hundreds could mean in such a case. I hear that once is supposed to mean everything. Hundreds! No; I don't think hundreds would mean anything at all. And how long did this obsession for hundreds last?"

"One summer."

"Hundreds of times in one summer! You seem to have been a capable little fellow! Hard-working at something that did not mean anything! It leads me to recall the Infant Hercules! And you were not tired out?"

"I had just begun."

"Mercy! What kept you from continuing on into thousands in the autumn?"

"She was sent away to school."

"It served her right! She should have been made a public example of in her community. But it could not have been a kissing-school—unless she was entered as a post-graduate—or perhaps as a teacher. No! most likely a school of correction. And where were *you* sent to be corrected?"

"I wasn't sent anywhere.'

"The man never is, I have heard. But what became of her in the institution that received her as an inmate? She reformed? Where is she now?"

"She is living at her home."

"And so she never married—of course not! Not after such a record!"

"She has hardly had time to marry; she graduated only last June."

"Graduated! Is *she* a college girl? There seems to be somewhat too much of the College Girl!"

"She is said to be very beautiful—a budding Juno: the country girls there often are."

"Really! To fit them, I suppose, to go with the budding Jupiters. If it were only vouchsafed to me to see one of the Jupiters!"

"This edge of sod on which I press my foot outside your yard fence—she has two thousand acres of it like one lawn set with forest trees."

"What interesting grass! I should think you would go back to it! Doesn't she encourage you to return—to pasture?"

"I haven't been back for three years. I have not seen her for six years."

"But I notice that you evade the question: does she not encourage you?"

"Not to my knowledge."

"But she does not discourage you!"

"Not to my knowledge! I have no knowledge on the subject favourable or unfavourable."

"Well, I have! I think she encourages you. I feel that she does. I can feel it all through me. And that is why she does not marry. She is waiting for you to come back. And if you have not heard from her, you soon will hear. Oh, she will write! asking whether it is not time for you to be coming home; at least for old time's sake, to let her hear from

you! While I think of it, her being a Juno probably comes from eating blackberries: Junos always do make you think they have been fed on blackberries. But I do not like Junos, whether produced by blackberries or by any other berries whatsoever. I do not like them: they frighten me. And under all the circumstances I think it safer for me to be in the house."

After which the nook became silent.

I walked away light-hearted. I trod on air. I had strengthened my position, and I thanked the day and the deed and the hedge — all hedges. But had she supposed that she was the only enchantress? Had I slept all my life to the sex until I woke to her? Had I arrived at being the right kind of youth without having travelled the road of being the right kind of urchin?

How easy it is to form a pleasant habit! The next day at about the same hour I did not resist the temptation again to bury my face in the fragrant hedge and take a second chance and murmur:—

"How do you do."

This time I heard no laughter. And there was no answer—at first. When finally she did speak, her voice was repellent. It denoted displeasure at being intruded upon ; resentment at privacy violated. For me to stop there one day—*that* was an impulse, a jest. To come again — that was an intention — my policy. Thus at least I explained the rebuke in her tone and question :—

"How did you know I was here?"

"Do you think a hedge could hide you? I see you through these thick boughs as through your veil."

Her reply descended over the fence on my head like a pikestaff :—

"Isn't that—sentimental?"

"You will call it by another name some day —a stronger name."

"More sentimental."

"Have it your capricious way now : the years will have it their steady way!"

"Most sentimental!"

Some moments of silence passed : I intended they should pass. I waited motionless by the hedge. I made not a sound. Then from out

her bower of ivy came a query—barely audible, timidly searching :—

"Have you gone?"

The little sentence made its way through leaves and thorns like the tendril of a plant which reaches out to take hold of what it cannot see but would entwine.

I did not stir and I did not answer.

"*Have you gone?*"

This time the query became louder, and it was poignant. There was disappointment in it —a little shock—a little wound. If she could have seen the calculated triumph on the countenance outside the hedge, I do not know what would have become of the little green tendril, but I think I know what would have happened to the whole blooming bush: it would have frozen stiff and remained frozen stiff—through the whole winter probably. The lowest temperature in New York the following February would have been found *there*.

I tapped on one of the iron spears till it rang musically :—

"Did you hear that tap?"

There was a secret laughter again—most

quickly checked ; and then a voice reached me, amazingly indifferent :—

"I did."

"Well, you may have thought it a tap on the fence, but it was not. It was the politest, gentlest rap at the classic portal of a mind to make an inquiry : what were you thinking of when I stopped and spoke to you ?"

"A very prying question ! Very bold, very prying ! I was thinking of you."

"I supposed so. Did you exhaust the subject ? Because the subject as it stands here feels a little exhausted !"

"I was not thinking of you in the way you are pleased to imagine—not in connection with myself. I was thinking of you in connection with your books : that is very different !"

"Well," I said, "there *is* a connection between me and my books. I wish the world thought so. But my publisher tells me it does not. He tells me that the world has never thought of my books in connection with me or in connection with anything else on this earth. That's the publisher's view. I am sorry. I may not have created the literature of ages, but

I fear I have created the literature of one useful man's premature old age. And they say no one has ever invented perpetual motion. Well, at least, I am the genius that in the literature of this nation has invented eternal rest. Circulate! As well expect the law of gravitation to circulate! No; there are three things on this windy globe that stay where they are: lost cannon-balls, my first editions, and gravity."

"Sometimes I have wished that there wasn't any connection between you and some of your books. Sometimes. With some of them."

"Well, at times I have wished that there wasn't any connection, too: at times—at hard times. I am ready to be disconnected now if there were any agency to bring about the disconnection. But there isn't. Death won't do it. When I am dead, my books will settle over me like iron *immortelles*; heavy and lifeless—but lasting."

"Don't speak of being dead! It fills the sky with clouds—clouds that weep through years for loss and remembrance. Don't! And I said that there *have been* times when I wished you had not written some of your books. But

there are no such times now. And take back what you have just said against your stories!"

The amount of fight there was in that one breath of hers so quietly breathed out of her green nook! The Seventh Regiment moving down Fifth Avenue may look warlike to you; the West Point Cadets as they sweep by are a sign of future Spartan fields. By comparison with the spirit of combat in her at that moment these warriors are as wraiths of imaginary carnage.

It was a stupendous revelation. Within a day, since that talk of the day previous, there had been a change in her. Never before had she espoused the championship of my books; now she had interposed her girlish figure—the woman's heroic world-figure—between the crowd and the man she would defend.

While this was passing joyously in my mind, I did not delay my reply an instant. And I hid my happiness at the change I had noticed in her:—

"I had already taken my words back," I said quietly. "They were meant to be taken back after they had served their purpose to jest

with. I have nothing against my books except youth and inexperience. Youth soon goes. Experience must come in time. May it not come to me too late for me to win what my youth waits for ! "

Well she knew what it was my youth waited for ; and she was silent. She was always silent when I spoke of my love, as though each time she must pause to weigh it once more. Then she replied more quickly, as resolved to make her thought clear :—

" I was not thinking of that, either. Not of the books you have written, but of the stories you have not written ; I was wondering why you have not written *them*."

I was impetuous with my reply, for the trouble was an old trouble ; I had lived with it from the time I had begun to write. I was ready with my reply :—

" I, too, have wondered. I suppose we all do, whether we write stories or do not write stories. We all wonder about the stories we do not write. There are stories that flash upon the screens of our consciousness, remain an instant, then disappear again in the unknown.

Stories sometimes follow us for days as closely as our shadows and then halt as if with weariness and are lost behind us on the road. Stories hover in front of us like winged messengers, beckoning us on toward new worlds. Man is the story-telling animal. About all of us crowd mute things that ask at our hands the touch to awaken them, that plead with us for the gift of life. It is as if one common universal dust bespoke for itself evermore the miracle of creation and demanded that man give to it the cast of man. I, too, have wondered at the stories I have *not* written. Why out of so many I have written so few, and none of them among the great ones."

There was stillness beyond the hedge, and this grew more intense. My ear then caught the sounds of movements : a book was laid down ; there were soft slippings of her silken draperies as she changed her position ; I heard her fingers —these wonderful fingers—suddenly brush with an impetuous rippling movement across the leaves of the ivy as one might in a sweep of passion strike the strings of a harp. When she spoke, her voice had deepened, and it trembled.

"I was not quite thinking of that, either. Not of the stories you have never chosen to write, but of the stories you *have* attempted to write—but have never wholly written. You know that sometimes as we look at a rainbow our eyes wander from it to a fainter, higher rainbow spanning the lower glaring one. Both rainbows are parts of the same event of cloud and sun, of falling drops and falling light. And sometimes as I read one of your stories, I look from it to a story that seems to bend above it — to the fainter, higher story you almost wrote in writing the other. I see a rainbow nearer the dome; I see an unwritten story nearer greatness. Your actual stories always suggest greater stories; and I have more faith in you than I have in what you have done."

Thus the truth in her must come out; she was as a child for very truth-telling. I was even quicker in my reply this time because this problem too was a familiar problem, the trouble of troubles, the woe of woes. I was quicker with my rejoinder and defence:—

"It is because I am young, because I lack experience. Youth, inexperience—that is the

trouble! I too know that each of my stories is a broken, unfinished arch. I know that the colours spread over that arch are not the colours of Nature: they are false and they are confused. No story that I have written is either the arch of form or the prism of light: I realize all this more deeply than any one else could."

There I stopped: I could not bear to tell her that youth and inexperience were not the only obstacles; that life otherwise had never given me my chance. I let it go at youth and inexperience and kept hindrances and struggles to myself.

Her reply came eagerly back to me, as though she had scarcely waited for mine, as though nothing could now keep her from going to the limit of her purpose:—

"Youth soon goes, as you say. And experience may come, as you say. But how long may experience be in coming? To how many has it come too late—too late for life to have what makes life full and sweet. May not experience be hastened? If it can be hastened, ought it not to be hastened?"

I answered with ready scorn:—

"Tell how to hasten it!"

For a while she did not answer. When she did, there was a fine withdrawal in her nature; it had shrunk from touching the personal in this way. Yet, despite this, she would speak out:—

"Have you no help, no advice, no guidance?"

I answered proudly:—

"My help, my advice, my guidance are the great models—the great masters."

She answered persuasively:—

"The great masters are dead. You can study the great models, the great models cannot study you. You can find out their faults, they cannot point out your faults. A living counsellor—why have you none, to do that?"

I answered with my stiff-necked confidence:—

"No living counsellor have I; nor will I have."

For a long time—what seemed to me an endless time—she deliberated. I could barely hear what she said at length, so timid was it, so shrinking with delicacy—yet so resolute:—

"May I be your counsellor?"

"*You!*"

"They used to say in college that I had some small gift of that sort, to judge things. The Professors told me this during the years that I studied under them. The Professor of English especially; he would sometimes set before us the work of finding out where a great master was wrong—where he nodded. My room-mate would tell me this when we sometimes exchanged our exercises to see which could better the other. It may have been kindness in them all. It may not have been true that I have any such gift—to find fault. But if I have——"

I answered her as at last meeting her alone in Life's road:—

"I can have but one counsellor: the woman I love, the woman who loves me: only to her could I throw open the gates that are shut against the world and say: See of what I am made. Here I am; here is all there is of me. These shapes, forms, images—they are my ideals. These are my emotions, those are my enthusiasms. Here are my gifts, there are my

hopes. As all these are mine and as you are mine, they are yours. Learn to be at home with them; then you will be at home with me. And help me! So that I may perhaps leave one piece of work—if but one—that will long stand, drawing to itself the eyes of the world as an arch of eternal form and as the hues of Nature's light. I have asked you many times to marry me. I ask you now—will you? And will you be that counsellor?"

The silence of the garden! The emptiness of the beautiful day! The paling brilliance of the sun! That shadow and chill of noon! She was gone!

Heart-sore and with heavy feet I walked away. But I was right. From her, of all persons in the world, I could accept no aid. If I must win her by what I was and what I could do, she must not help. If she required of me that I scale an all but unscalable wall to reach her, she must not open a gate through the wall that I might enter easily, slothfully.

But well I knew, perhaps a little grudgingly, what a counsellor she could have been. And as I walked away, once more there rose

before me the whole scene when I first beheld her :—

A slender figure on the edge of the platform in the great audience hall of her college, with a vast audience of young and old attentive and reverent to her. She standing there with the reluctance of girlhood and shrinking modesty of nature where she had never stood and would never again stand—to speak to the world once and then retire : yet resolved to make the moment worth while if possible by uttering something true within herself.

She had won the honours in Literature, and it was for Literature she had chosen to speak. And she spoke so simply, without display of scholarship which would have been easier than simplicity. In the most natural manner, and as though she could not help saying it, she drew attention to an ideal within the human spirit as to what no man hath done. That was the title of her essay, *What No Man hath Done* ; and she unfolded her theme around one instinct of man which forever sends him onward along his road—unsatisfied. No matter what book we read, she said, something within us lifts us

above that book, leads us beyond that book: we must press on. No masterpiece in any art is a measure of what there is in any one of us. We are forever asking for pictures that have never been painted. We see statues unquarried, yet in the marble of Paros. Our ears listen for music that has never reached human instruments. Our eyes vaguely make out temples that have never been built. In our hands lie the books that have never been written. It is thus with the human spirit in the arts. It cannot long fold its wings upon its own masterpiece; it rests there awhile, then must fly on. Thus all achievement is but small part of what man strives to achieve; and thus the old always leave the young something to do. Forever the young! The eyes of the world, fixed on the Road of Time, see the weary and broken figures of the old pass down it and disappear; and looking up the road, it always expects to see, coming to replace these, some youth, some stranger, some young unknown. Always a youth—the young stranger—*who will do what no man hath done.*

The conversation through the blossom-sweet

hedge, where our hearts one time almost met like birds in May, had taken place a few weeks before the morning of which I write. And now on that June morning I was on my way, swinging along across the city, to tell her of my first masterwork.

I, a young stranger on the road of time.

CHAPTER III

I RANG the door-bell as one on whose shoulders had fallen the Mantle of the Succession—that Mantle of Beautiful Work which has descended through the ages from one youth to another youth, always to a youth.

From impatience to enter I seemed to be made to wait too long. When at last the door was opened by the butler, who was not the one formally to open it, he looked flurried as though this duty had called him from other duties. Yet he was prepared to receive me ; and plainly acting under orders, he invited me to come out into the garden ; whereupon he led the way through the hall to the rear veranda, from which the garden could be seen.

As I followed, wondering at his unusual manner and also at this unaccountable reception

of me, further evidence offered itself that the household was at this early hour not ready for visitors. Shawls and top-coats lay on the hat-rack; a maid flitted past me apologetically with wraps on her arm; the doors of the breakfast-room were opened, the breakfast service had not yet been removed, on the floor stood a hamper heaped with fruits and bonbons and bottles of wine; and when at the end of the hall the butler with another bow withdrew and I stepped out upon the veranda, there likewise was disorder. The veranda formed the southern exposure of that older New York mansion; it was already fitted up for early summer with fresh awnings, and I could but notice that the chairs were still grouped as guests of the evening before had drawn them together. But in another instant I had caught sight of her and lost thought of everything else.

She was walking along the path at the rear of the garden: slowly as though she waited for some one to seek her there by arrangement. At that vision of her I halted, as I remember still, with a downward step half taken; I think

my breath almost stopped. For it was as though the curtains of the ideal had been unexpectedly drawn apart, allowing me to see there in nature the heroine of my romance. There before my very eyes was the essence and fable of life's morning—there in that slender, full-moulded form moving through the cool limpid air; with dew-drops on the verdure about her feet; with fragrant buds opening on the boughs around her hands and eyes. She looked all white and silver as though the mists of night had just unrolled themselves from her shape—all white and silver except for the lustrous gold of her hair. The sun, beginning to fall into the garden above the roofs of the houses, sometimes touched her face, sometimes was shut off from it as she moved along. The Old Greek said that divine things go on light feet: she went on light feet.

At a bend of the path she turned to retrace her steps, and as she did so cast a glance toward the house and discovered me, looking at her. With a quick gesture of grace she waved a white scarf she carried, so thin, so diaphanous that it floated on the air like a banner of

morning frost. I do not know why, but it brought to mind Isolde's scarf shaken beckoningly at that ill-timed hunting hour with Tristan. Then as I hurried down toward her she advanced responsively toward me with steps of eagerness, her countenance marvellously lighted up.

When we met, she laid her hands intimately in mine and came closer to me than she had ever stood and searched my face with emotions she had never revealed. There was some wonderful change in her, some latent excitement ; she might have welcomed me thus if actual tidings of my happiness had outstripped my haste and apprised her of my coming. I lost not a moment to give her the explanation of my hurried visit ; and I endeavoured with my first words to link it with something dear and sacred in her own memory.

"Do you remember," I asked, smiling, "that last year on a June day like this, in a great college and before a great audience, one of the graduating class read an essay in which she had something to say about stories that no one has ever written and that the world waits for ?"

When I began to speak, her eyes were resting

on mine with lights and shadows in them as though she were happy, yet not happy. Before I finished, their expression changed; only disappointment darkened them, simple wonderment at me for saying what I had said. And she replied reluctantly, as though not pleased to be forced to recall what had been her day of triumph. It was her triumph in it that always made her averse to mention it.

"I remember, of course," she said. "But why do you bring that up now?"

"Do you remember that a certain young stranger sat in the audience, listening to every word, as he told you soon afterwards?"

"Of course," she replied again, still more against her will, as though those distant matters had no place in these intense moments. "But why do you go back to that—at this time?"

"Because," I said, "I have brought you one of those stories. This morning when I awoke, it awoke with me: it begins my better work: all that I have so far done—let that go! With this I enter upon my real life-work. And I have hurried here to tell you—to tell *you* first!"

The light and warmth of her welcome died

out of her face. Without a word she turned and walked away from me.

I stood stricken in my tracks. She came back, and with a kind of sacred indignation reproached me :—

"Is *that* what brought you? Did you come to speak to me about one of your stories?"

It was as though she whom I had thought the spirit of all gentleness, the incarnation of the exquisite, had put out her hand and with inconceivable brutality struck me a blow in the face. The glory of the day died out of the world; the gorgeous dream of the morning burst on the air like a roseate bubble and was gone; buoyancy of spirit tumbled headlong to the ground with a broken wing; enthusiasm was murdered. My silence seemed all the more to arouse her as she, in evident pain, reiterated her incredible words :—

"Did you come to tell me about a story?"

I stepped back from her :—

"It was a mistake."

She followed me closely up in the stress of her emotion :—

"Was my note to *you* a mistake?" she asked. "Was *it* of no consequence that you pass it over in this way to speak of other things? Was it not worth a thought, a word?"

"Your note!" I cried, bewildered, but catching at a clue. "What note?"

She in turn looked bewildered, and she also grasped at a clue :—

"I sent you a note after breakfast. Did you not receive a note from me by messenger?"

"I have received no note ; I must have left my apartment before he reached there."

"And you did not come in reply to my note?" she insisted with some calmness, as though light were now breaking in upon her.

"I have told you why I came."

"Then you do not know what I wrote you. I wrote asking you to come and tell me goodbye this morning ; we are going to Europe this afternoon."

Since the first day of our acquaintance I had never been separated from her for any long time, a few weeks at farthest. Now this vast chasm of separation! I seemed to stand on the edge of an abyss, gazing into vacancy.

"How long will you be gone?"

"Until some time in October."

I counted the months; they made nearly half a year.

"Are you going—alone?"

"My father and I are the only members of the family to start; my brothers do not think that a summer in Europe promises as much pleasure as a summer in the United States. My aunt is to join us in Paris."

She went on, at once taking me into full confidence. She made it her first point that I should have details. In the party to sail would be some old friends: father and mother and daughter. The daughter had been her college confidante and still was her most intimate friend. There lay peril for me: her brother was one of my rivals. It was enough that he could press his suit through his own worth. She continued: during part of the summer other friends would join them—a mother and her son. The mother had been the friend of her mother's; the son was a University honour-man, and he was now pursuing post-graduate studies in Germany. I knew him well also—another rival to be

dreaded on his own account. Her father and aunt, she concluded, were to motor through France : she did not like to motor ; while they were away, her chaperon would be this mother —the friend of her mother's.

As she outlined these plans and pleasures, old savage instincts welled up within me, jealousy, rage, with their wretchedness. I wheeled upon her in the garden path :—

" And you arranged to be gone half a year with those you care for most and without a word to me—until the last moment ? "

I put into my voice the sense of a wrong ; the sense of a right ; my disappointment in her character ; my arraignment of the standards of her conduct. She stood silent and I repeated my words :—

" You did *this* ! Is *that* what *you* thought of *me* ? "

She drew herself up in a quivering moral growth as though no such touch of censure had ever been laid upon her in life.

" Was there any obligation that I should make you acquainted with our plans of summer travel ? "

"No," I cried. "There was no obligation! More than an obligation or nothing. But the last moment is too late for any good-bye to you from me."

I lifted my hat and turned away from her toward the house. After I had gone several steps her voice overtook me. It was half amused, half plaintive :—

"Will you wait? Will you listen?"

I would neither wait nor listen. As I strode on, my eyes seemed blinded to the ground before me. She suddenly laid a light touch on my arm :—

"I could not tell you sooner! I myself did not know!"

I stopped. She had regained composure now, she was smiling again ; and she looked into my eyes as though she had discovered there was nothing wrong between us, only the comedy of a misunderstanding. Then she explained :—

"There was no chance to tell you. My father came home late last night from a dinner with some friends at the Club. It was while there he learned that some of them were to sail to-day ; and he at once decided that we should

sail with them. You may not know that a day's notice is usually all the time that my father gives us : sailing anywhere seems to him so easy. He did not reach home until after midnight, and it was then too late for word to reach you. But I wrote immediately after breakfast, asking you to come and say good-bye to me, and as the servants would be packing up and the house would be in disorder, I arranged to tell you good-bye here."

And then she added, after allowing time for this explanation to have due weight with me :—

"I thought this was a good deal for me to do. And when you came and paid no attention —to our sailing—to my note—to a good-bye— and began to speak of your work—as though my going away meant nothing—why, then, very naturally——" She broke off and looked away from me.

Our misunderstanding was over. We were walking slowly along the garden path in silence. Silence at such moments reunites more quickly than words. And as we walked, I am sure

that our thoughts met once more on the few moments we were to be together and on all that must be said.

As we passed the marble seat, she, with sudden notice of it and a slight gesture, led the way thither. There she seated herself, facing me. She linked her hands in her lap and bent slightly over toward me as though she were now impatiently coming back to something too long pushed aside. She spoke with a rush of eagerness :—

"And now—the story! What beautiful tidings to sail with and to keep by me all summer!"

I barely heard her, for my thoughts were on the picture she made.

The old wall of the garden darkly shadowed with ivy rose behind her ; some of the topmost branches, falling outward and downward, almost overhung with leaves of tender green her golden head. Near her stood the rose-bush thickly crowded with the brief procession of its buds. She sat there under the blue sky of the summer morning with the freshness of the blue and silver sea in the air about her ; an American

vestal of the college in her land and race and time. Yet like a Greek vestal on the Greek-like seat; Greek-like in the softness of snowy vestments which we in our day touch only as the hardness of marble; Greek-like in symmetry, grace, health. Not an ornament; not the simplest band of linked gold around her neck bared low; not a gem in the ear, nor bracelet on the arms bared to the elbows—arms the chisellings of which were as of alabaster and the flesh tones of which were as alabaster shadowed by rose leaves. A comb of palest amber out of an old Greek sea caught up the soft gleaming gold of her hair: across the top of the comb lay a little garland of shaken windflowers. In her eyes the one blue of the sky and of the sea for the gladness of that day.

"And now," she had said, bending over toward me with sympathy and eagerness, "the story!"

I slowly shook my head:—

"When I was ready to tell you, you were not ready to listen. Now you are ready to listen, and I cannot tell you."

She looked at me with swift disappointment and waited for some explanation.

"Do you remember Othello's words," I said, finding his mournful ones better than any of my own at that moment. "Do you remember Othello's words on that last night? When he took up the candle which was to light his way as he walked toward Desdemona in her sleep, he mused that if he put out the candle, he could light it again, but that if he put out the light of her life, no power could it relume. When I awoke this morning, I had within me a new flame, the light of something beautiful that was like a flame. I hurried here to you with it: and like a torch in the hand of one who runs through the air, with every step I took it flamed larger and more bright. But when I met you, as with one gust of black wet night you blew it out. It is not out like a life, I know, never to flame within me again. After you are gone, perhaps when I set to work to-night, I shall expect to rekindle it. But for this day at least it is out — out like a candle. The thought of your going away fills me like darkness and

rain ; the story is like a candle out in a rain at night."

My sad words were as new life to her. I think she would not have had me suffer less at the thought of her going. But that she was not to hear the story only fed her desire to hear it. Her whole nature had quickly turned toward it as bringing me before her in new light, with a larger importance. She did not hesitate to voice her protest.

"But I *cannot* go away without knowing! Give me some little picture of it to take with me." And then she added, with a smile of archness and of warning :—

"You know it is all of yours I have to take!"

"What of yours have I to keep?" I said, glad of a demurrer on such grounds.

With a quick impulse she lifted the scarf from her lap and lightly shook out its folds :—

"I will leave you this," she said. "Only, it has been around my neck."

"Let it be around your neck once more that I may see the picture: then it will not be something apart from you."

Laughing, she shook out the film of scarf and threw it as a band of white mist over her hair and let it slip down about her neck. Then taking an end of it in each hand she drew these down transversely across her breast and so sat looking at me — as a portrait — for remembrance.

But as in a portrait the sitter may, unaware, let come into his eyes some look that will be full of meaning long after he has vanished, she unconsciously gave some revelation of herself to last while she was away. After which, with the careless air of one who is not unmindful that what is bestowed is worthless, she, smiling, folded the scarf and handed it to me—that grave portrait light slowly vanishing in her eyes.

For a third time she now made her request as one who has kept her part of a compact and has justice on her side. She leaned back against the marble seat so that she was a little shadowed under the tender green of the ivy boughs.

"Now I will have what is coming to me," she said, laughing and eager.

I turned half round to shut out the tormenting picture of her—to put away the thoughts and emotions of the instant. It was as if some young worker in silver, one day, far from the surroundings of his craft and sitting beside her who was everything to him but his art, should be asked by her to forget love and life, and thinking of his art only, describe for her some work in silver of which he had as yet only dreamed in his distant shop.

I could not do this at once, and I sat looking across the garden spread out under its blue sky, in its mesh of silver light, filled with morning freshness from the laughing sea, strewn with its dews, sweet with its opening buds. Then slowly I began, in order to give each word its full weight :—

She must imagine as the *locale* of the story the buildings and grounds of a Young Ladies' Seminary—an old-established American school especially liked by American families of culture and wealth. The opening would be the great day of the college year, Commencement Day. The actual scene would be the chapel of the college. The moment would be that when the

heroine of the story, one of the graduates, would rise from her seat on the platform and come forward to read her essay. In the vast audience of old and young were strangers, and among these was a stranger youth. As she stood with every eye turned in beautiful reverence toward her while she read, he, too, looked and listened, and the first love of his life came to him. Afterwards, out on the sunny, crowded college campus, he singled her out and sought her acquaintance. She was standing in the shade of one of the old trees on the lawn, not alone. A professor of the college was talking with her. He had long loved her, but the relation of teacher and pupil had constrained him to silence. Within an hour that relation of constraint had ceased ; and he was there in the open of nature and with all the rights of man. When the youth came up, it was the end of the professor's love-story ; the two young people loved each other at sight and irrevocably : as irrevocably as Hero and Leander. The story would then take them through the two or three years of his courtship, with their misunderstandings and quarrels. It would bring

them to her confession of her love and to their marriage. After marriage it would lead them on through the experiences of manhood and womanhood, of two lives deepening, broadening, being slowly harmonized.

To that faint outline of the bare story I added a few words to show what its setting would be in the life of our country :—

"It may surprise you to discover what I have discovered—that the field in which this story is laid has never been entered. If any American writer has ever found his way to it, his presence there was too unimportant to be noticed; if he worked in it, the traces of his work were too slight to be memorable. For more than a hundred years the American College Girl has been the triumphant figure in the womanhood of our civilization. She was that in the generation of our grandmothers. She was that in our mothers' time. She is more than ever that in the civilization of the country now. The whole nation has always been at work to bring her to perfect flower. It is she whom the nation has always regarded its typical bride, its fittest mate for the fireside, the safest, strongest mother of

its men. Yet no American writer has lastingly touched this mighty truth. In a virgin field of the nation has stood, overlooked and unnoticed, the most exquisite figure of its girlhood—the vestal of the American College. So that while the bare love-theme of my story is as simple and old as the tale of Hero and Leander, in our literature it has never, with its full meaning, found a place. My work will be something that no man has done."

Then as the young worker in silver, having imparted to her whom he loved his dream of a masterpiece, might close the door of his distant shop with his thought now returned wholly to her, I added :—

"It is a faint, poor picture. But take it with you! Take it! Keep it! All summer let it speak to you of me and make me best remembered! Do not forget that it is *from me to you*!"

Thus I finished with my love-confession once more on my lips; it was the union of my love and my life-work.

Instantly I became aware of what all along I had been barely conscious. No sooner had

I begun to speak than the little movements which were spontaneous with her, movements of her head and neck, of the hands and arms, of the feet, of the whole body vibrant with health and joy, all these had ceased, and there had come on one intense stillness—the stillness of an entire nature when it forgets itself in attention.

Now this stillness lasted. I waited for some word of pleasure, praise, sympathy. None reached me. Until with amazement and pain and incredulity I turned to her for the meaning of such a mystery. As I did so, one cloud of faint red, the first I had ever seen there, surged outward and covered her from brow to throat. It was Nature's cloud to enwrap her for protection and concealment. And she did not speak because Nature spoke for her, and in speaking went back to a language more ancient and instinctive and powerful than words. By that changing hue of the skin, by that intense stillness of the body, by the lips that could not open, by the eyes which flashed on me their startled and swiftly changing lights, by the alarm of the whole countenance and its hostility

and abhorrence—by all these signs Nature spoke for her.

The reading was too plain to miss, and I had to read it, and this was what I read : she had drawn the inference that it was my design to make use of her College and of her College life and of one of the College Professors and of myself in a piece of fiction that was to be given to the world. That was the shock. That was why she now sat, voicing through every avenue of her being except articulate speech the outcry of her astonishment and displeasure and pain.

It was possible for me to imagine some of the pictures that were passing before her mind : the terrifying announcement of such a book by the publishers ; the crying of it by newsboys on trains : the stacks of it in shop windows, on the counters of department stores ; the reviews of it in the press with dissections of it—of herself—as a character in fiction where her words, thoughtless acts, innocent motives, little playfulnesses, had all been caught up and set down for the reading world to amuse itself with, then toss aside : and sooner or later the casting of the book into the swift, sad wastage of things with a

rejected image of herself. I had to look upon still other pictures of her imagination which must so have startled and wounded her in those moments: the finding of its way back by such a book to her College: the recognition of herself as a character in it by her Professors and old schoolmates and younger girls: the dubious delight with which they would read of a love affair between herself and a member of the faculty: the appearance of myself as the triumphant hero: the carrying of our lives onward to the point of an engagement: the bad breeding of it, the bad manners, the bad taste, the bad everything; the stupidity of it, the liberty, the audacity, the crudeness, the brutality, the ingratitude, the treachery, the hideousness of the mercenary.

I sat there, seeing all this and saying nothing. She could not stoop to words about it; neither could I stoop to words about it. When a man is wounded by a woman, what is he to do but let the wound bleed under his coat; least of all throw his coat open and point to the gash and laceration. I sat waiting for her to act—to end her silence as she would; and by that

curious feat of the mind which lets it escape to some little quiet thing far away, when great things are falling in upon it with crushing weight, there arose in my memory the dim story of another youth—a Greek: How one summer day he, young hunter, with his pack of high-lineaged hounds, having wearied of the chase and fain to seek shade against the noon-day heat, drew near a forest, and innocently entering it, approached a grove with pointed cypresses and a running stream, where, unprofaned by human eye, Dian rested in noon-day seclusion; and how for this offence of having come too near, she had him torn to pieces by his own pack. I was in my way another Actæon: the chosen hounds of my imagination, as I was in the very act of joyously cheering them on to capture an immortal loveliness, had been set on me as the common dogs of my own destruction.

And this terrifying doubt of me which had overwhelmed her from the direction of the story was not alone. No doubt ever travels alone; it is always followed by a flock of doubts; and during these moments of silence and suspense between us, when the old was

gone and the new not yet come, the rest of a flock of suspicions and distrusts reached her and settled one by one in her mind. When they were all arrived, she was done with me.

She rose, and with her native courtesy not lessened but more guarded she said :—

"Shall we walk?"

In that instant she had discarded me.

Now it is only the mind that can thus instantly dismiss. The mind takes hold as the hand takes hold, and it can let go as the hand lets go. The mind can for a moment, an hour, a year, a life-time, hold to an idea, a cause, a man, a woman ; and in an instant it can drop idea or cause or man or woman. The mind can do this. But there is another power within us which does not thus take hold and cannot thus let go—that greater power which grasps the reins of our sympathies, emotions, affection, attachments. Man, because he is unable to name this power which so rules him, poorly calls it the heart. The heart does not take hold as the hand takes hold, as the mind takes hold ; it cannot let go as the hand lets go, as the mind lets go. The heart takes hold as the

flesh of one part of the hand seizes the flesh of the other part of the hand. And from what it has once grown to, the heart, if it must be separated, has to be torn. It is for the heart to have its fibres rent, to be wounded and to bleed, to suffer piteously and to be healed slowly if it is to be healed ever. The commonest tragedy of our everyday lives is the clinging of the heart to those whom the mind, long years before, may have rejected and condemned.

She, as an act of her judgment, had discarded me in a moment's brevity. But she had still to take leave of me in the name of those other things that were not thus to be dismissed. And that was why, perhaps, in rising she did not at once return to the house. In her decision she had already returned to the house, but her heart lingered in the garden.

And now as she started, with me walking beside her in silence, there came out what was so fine in her nature, so inbred, so strong. Her excitement and emotion increased every instant ; and against these she had to draw more and more upon her self-control : there must be no disorder about anything so grave and sad

as this—no ungentleness—no outbreak—no disturbance of the right values of herself. Out of this struggle to come victorious, she had to gain time ; and to gain time she began to break off a flower here and there along the garden ramble and to employ her words on these.

" This is a nosegay to me from the garden —for the steamer," she said tremblingly. Thus she plucked her flowers, and thus we passed along, I awkward and wretched and angry and wronged beyond endurance. She spoke trifles about this flower and that flower ; I replied with trifles. She laughed at nothing, I laughed at nothing. She sought calmness, I sought calmness. I had offered her my best, and she had made the worst of it ; and as we faced our tragedy, we laughed and spoke of blossoms broken from the bushes.

We reached the end of the ramble, and there before us was the iron seat. Once in the case of another man's misfortune I had amused myself by giving it a name. I had chosen to think that there she discarded her not quite worthy suitors. Now I confronted it ; now it was my turn.

She hesitated, standing beside a shrub and nervously twisting a spray of it for a bit of green; not looking at me in the meantime; until with a voice which could not control itself she broke through all reserve with one warning and commanding question:—

"Are you going to write that story?"

She was giving me a last chance. I had clearly seen how intense was her hostility, how surely it would bring the end of everything between us. Therefore my better judgment might have come to my rescue; and with better judgment a change of purpose. She afforded me this opportunity—but the question had cost her a great effort.

With all the deference I could express, with all regret, I replied:—

"I am going to write the story."

She twisted off the tough stem and turned to the seat, and there, seating herself at one end, she scattered her flowers in her lap and began to put them together.

Before I attempt to set down here the rest of our conversation, it should be borne in mind

that this is done only as memory brings back the words, and memory in such a case is a poor historian. We were both deeply moved; we were greatly excited: within an hour I could not have recalled our exact words. Instead of an hour, years have passed since then. Great changes have taken place in life. Other feelings have replaced those of that morning; quietude has settled on that scene: and a light falls on it now that did not rest there then.

Our words were quick, living words, torn from us, not well ordered and well wrought together, little by little, like the links of a finished chain which has grown cold. Doubtless not one thing about her belonging to those years could I now set down as it actually was: I know the truth, but I cannot recall the little things that made up the truth. So that when I attempt to write down what she said, you must believe that time and memory and emotion have all been at work, covering her actual words as with mosses, shedding on them softened shadows and lights, and throwing around them that tender veil of atmosphere which is distance.

As for myself, as for what I said to her, short shrift will be made of that.

She had taken her seat then, and having scattered her flowers in her lap, sought for one with which to start her nosegay. And keeping her eyes always on her work she inquired with the courtesy of a stranger to another stranger :—

"Will you go home this summer?"

I, watching the movements of her fingers and the shifting shadows on her face, made my quiet reply :—

"I expect to stay in New York."

"But if you should go home, you might not return?"

"If I went, I would return."

"You expect to live on in New York, then?"

"I expect to live on in New York."

She dropped the flowers she had started with and began over again the making of the nosegay.

"A summer brings so many changes. People go away, leaving people ; when they return, everything has changed for them all.

They may still be near, but they do not meet any more: the changes of a summer that come to us!"

"It is an old saying, it is an old truth."

"New York is so vast a place. Even if people do not go away, they are thrown together for a while, and then they are thrown apart. Acquaintanceships begin in New York we do not quite know how; and they come to an end, we do not quite know how."

I made no comment.

"And then the United States is so vast. Strangers who come to New York from distant parts of the country to live—I am afraid that we who have always lived here never quite get over thinking of them as—strangers. So often they do not look at life as we look at life. They do things that we may not do. As we may do things that they do not do. There are differences. For a while we get along together, then after a while we do not get along any more. We do not understand just how. The differences have come up meantime; I suppose that is the reason. And that means that we were never together from the first."

"Not every stranger who comes to New York from a distance feels that way. There is not a different New York nature, but the same human nature."

After a longer search among her flowers for the right one which seemed always harder to find now as the bouquet approached completion, she went on with her own thought, not replying to my thought:—

"Perhaps that was the reason my acquaintance with you from the first was so different. It was something apart because you were apart; you were not like New York people; not quite like any one I had known——"

Then something happened which lingers most vividly in my memory: it will be the last thing in life, I know, that I shall forget:—

She dropped her nosegay in her lap, holding it with both hands; and in entire forgetfulness of it she sat looking across her garden—looking into distance—with eyes of mystical sincerity. And after a little she began to speak, less to me than as if reckoning up life with herself:—

"All my life one thing has haunted me: on the horizon of my thought—at a dim distance

there has always been a kind of beautiful sacred country : a land I have often looked to when I did not wish to see anything else. I suppose it began to be built up in me when a child. My mother was from the country and always pined for the country and liked country life and country people and country ways. Perhaps it was her talks that first built up in me the visions of an ideal land—my country. I cannot quite describe what it was. Except that I believed in it. The right things were there, the true things, and things most dear. As I grew to girlhood, I began to think that out of it sometime some one would come to me. When I met you, I do not know why, but you came from your distant country and began to tell me how beautiful it was ; and I, looking within myself, saw my land. My land was like your land ; and in coming to me out of yours, you seemed to come to me out of mine."

She took up her flowers again and went on arranging them :—

"I suppose it was a girl's dream. I walked too far and too fast toward my dream."

"I not far enough toward mine."

She put the last flower into her nosegay and turned it round and round, looking at it in silence; then in silence she touched it to her eyes, one after the other, as mute balm for their threatened pain.

Until with one ungovernable impulse she broke through restraint and asked with cruel sternness :—

"How did you ever happen to come to New York in the first place?"

"I wanted to do great things. I meant to do great things. And I mean to do them."

"You mean your—*work*?"

"I mean my work."

We had come back to the subject that divided us: as though the mention of it dealt her a second indignity, she rose and started toward the house.

And thus it was all over between us. Perhaps it is a woman's nature to pour out some little tenderness on what it is sending away. What matters it, since she has saved herself, if she threw her charity to the discarded. As we walked along she said :—

"I hope you will be happy."

"I intend to be happy," I quickly retorted, but with no faith in my words.

She glanced surprisedly at me as though my boast had done her a wrong. A moment later what seemed a difficult concession was wrung from her :—

"Almost you persuade one to believe in you as you believe in yourself."

I answered in wrath :—

"I do not care for people who *almost* do things ; for people who almost love or almost hate ; for people who almost succeed or almost fail ; for people who almost believe or do not believe."

She drew herself up :—

"A woman can feel that way about a man. I feel that way. I could not marry a man who was almost something : almost a lawyer, almost a soldier, almost a painter, almost a writer."

"You are right."

We were near the house. She spoke with a kinder note the next time. It was more of her charity :—

"If a girl loved you, love would be every-

thing to her. She would throw everything else away—her judgment, cautions, reasons. Some day you may find a girl who would give her life for a summer with you away from the world : only herself and yourself in some spot. Some time a girl may love you well enough to do that."

"I hope so."

Again she glanced at me as though my words had hurt her.

We went up the steps of the veranda, and she turned toward the garden. As her glance rested on the marble seat under the ivy, she passed one hand quickly across her eyes as if to brush away the mournful sight of it.

In the hall some of the trunks had been brought down. She stopped at them. In each of us there must have been at the same moment that vague swell of uneasiness which fills those who are about to separate at the sea. The misunderstandings of life ! The thoughtless, rash, cruel words may be the last ! She stood looking down at the trunks, and she left her flowers on one with some thought perhaps of coming back there when I was gone.

We reached the front door, and I held out my hand :—

"Good-bye!"

She clasped her hands behind her head and pressed her head back against them. Then she turned her face sidewise as on a pillow :—

"Good-bye!"

As I went down the steps blindly I turned. She had come to the door and was standing in the doorway with her hands still clasped behind her head, and she was pressing her head back against them in bitter effort. With the sad blue of the sea in her eyes she asked :—

"If anything really were to happen, would you—would you—*understand*?"

Her eyes suddenly closed, and tears rushed out and hung on the lashes.

I sprang back to her.

"No, no, no!" she murmured to herself, stepping back and closing the door quickly.

SECOND PART

THE WAITING

CHAPTER I

THUS we parted : she to her summer amid the green valleys, around the blue lakes, beneath the snow-peaks of the Alps ; I to my summer in a pygmy apartment with an outlook on tin roofs and kitchen chimneys, and around the horizon —as my mountains against the sky-line—the far-separated towers of the city, its torrid pinnacles of steel and stone. She to leisure and pleasure and to her wooing by my rivals ; I to work and loneliness, waiting and doubt. She with a nature torn between casting me off and drawing me nearer ; I with a nature welded into one sorer want of her and into the will to win her yet.

When she closed the door against me and against the temptation of her heart to yield, I did not return to my apartment. And that day

I did not work. The stillness, the concentration, of work was impossible ; the mere thought of confinement within the paltry walls, which were the material measure of my importance in the world, brought rebellion to both mind and body. I was swept on toward the lives of men, the storm within me moving toward the storm without—to the vast mortal plains where the tempests of millions are never quieted. All that day I wandered over the city, an unobserved spectator in the ancient open-air theatre of the great passions. As into many lands I entered ; I passed as through many races ; traversed many an age, met many a story.

I beheld Abraham as he dwelt troubled of old on the Plains of Shinar. I saw Job crouched faithful amid the ashes of Uz. In an open square I encountered Rebecca with her pitcher ; and away from me once Ruth went, not walking bare-footed amid the cleanness of alien corn, but slouching foul-shod amid the squalor of alien alleys. I heard Shylock demanding across a counter the due and forfeit of his bond. In the Italian quarter, behind a scarlet rag which curtained a doorway, I came upon Tarquin

leering at chaste Virginia. Along the city shores of the Greeks, leaning against a door-post of a tenement, as once she leaned against the golden splendours of her proud father's hall, I discovered Nausicaa ; and I heard fall from her lips the words which the world has never ceased hearing in memory—stricken Nausicaa who loved and was not loved in return : "Farewell, stranger ! See that thou remember me in thy country on a day." Where the Sicilians throng I met young Daphnis, tunefullest of herdsmen, without his crook and pipe and goatskin mantle, but not without his thick locks and tawny skin and resistless smile, as centuries ago Theocritus found him idling, comely, shapely, on the slopes of woody Ætna—home of fires and snows. Down at the pier of a German steamship company on the seaward edge of a waiting crowd I saw Elsa with her rapt gaze turned down the bay ; and as the mighty steamer approached, I saw a warm Lohengrin just come from the valley of the Scheldt—yellow-bearded, yellow-haired, blue-eyed, arrived never to leave her for the whiteness of Montsalvat. Through the windows of a French pastry shop I saw

Pierrot flour-sprinkled; and darting into the shop from a rear room I saw Columbine fly at him, take his pasty cheeks between her thumbs and forefingers, and administer to his proper feature things well understood by them; then disappear again into the mysteries of her work and her joy. Once I thought I had a glimpse of Highland Mary. Once a street Ophelia of some unprincely Hamlet passed me with eyes too eager for the water's brink. Once I almost brushed against rouged Carmen as she wound in and out amid bold-eyed men, smoking and drinking under an awning on the side-walk; I caught the fragrance of her crimson rose as it drooped over the passion-flower of her withered heart. And once, near a church, I beheld, moving slowly toward it in spiritual revery, saintly Elizabeth—going to the shrine for Tannhäuser whom Venus held fettered to the mountain, while her own prayers for him took flight for Heaven.

As I wandered that summer day these stories I saw and many others in imagination and remembrance. I matched my own story with many of them, understanding it more clearly in

their distant lights, finding it overcast by their kindred shadows. Far back I tracked the drama of the heart of men, for ever changing, never changed.

Toward sundown, miles away, as twilight began to sift down upon the streets and the sidewalks to become thronged with people hurrying to many points, I noticed how on every face, in whatsoever direction turned, there rested the same expression—the common human look of going home ; and suddenly I shared in this universal instinct and grew homesick for my shelter. In the morning I had rebelled against it ; it had repelled me, irked me ; now the idea of being in it again brought a kind of familiar peace. Otherwise, too, the tragic mood of the day had ebbed ; its pain and sadness had left me ; buoyancy and joyfulness had come in as an evening tide from a tranquil sea. Soon returning by the quickest route, I stood at the door of my apartment with the key ready to insert in the lock ; and by that time I had regained the high spirits which are the rock of my birthright.

Please, if you care to enter my legal domicile with me, be in high spirits yourself. Nothing

despondent ever gets across my threshold; though it may be that I shall not escape the lot of man and in years to come open a Doorway to Sorrows; there to sit, long looking out upon the Fields of Sadness. Enter cheerfully, and do not let your cheerfulness be made to run away at the sight of cheerless things, of poor, mean, worthless things. For what you shall see will be most unlike all that you have by this time associated with her luxury. No rose-garden nor marble seat nor inestimable grass nor verandas and salons for me; but *res augusta domi*, which is very good Latin for the American day of small things.

And that small day was my meridian day: I dwelt in the cloudless noontide splendour of want.

With the key in the lock I stooped to pick up the evening newspaper—the six cents a week chronicle of the world; and I drew from under the door-sill a few letters, the corners of which protruded. Business letters were always my first concern, though there was not a business for any human being to write to me about. Entering, I threw up the window-sashes to

replace with fresh air the stale heated atmosphere which had been in the rooms since morning, when the chambermaid had fastened the foul air carefully in. One of my much-perforated, sand-coloured window-shades had a worn-out catch ; and a careless touch set it off like a fly-wheel out of gear. This was one of the days when the shade wound itself at the top of the window, tangling with it the end of the cord ; I must therefore mount a chair and draw it down into place. When I have become an author great and grey, I shall, like Goethe and Jean Jacques, write my autobiography and trace for the good of my lesser fellow-men the road of my exceptional career. Among the little things that had the honour to train me, some space shall be devoted to this window-shade ; I duly setting it down that an impatient youth was by it disciplined to patience—or to impatience —it is yet uncertain which.

Having descended from the chair, I sat down in it and looked over my letters. Always in those lean years I hoped that one might be from my publisher with some kind of miraculous good tidings. It is incomprehensible to me still why

my self-importance was always increased even by a letter from him of no consequence whatsoever. I think at that stage of my career I should have been puffed up by his condescension if he had notified me by post that he expected me to starve—and would help. To-day there was no letter from him. Those in my hand represented New York romances.

In such typical apartment buildings the poorer tenants are intermingled with people of wealth and social and professional awfulness; but there is no partiality in the attentions which all receive from advertisers of their wares. Thus it came about that I, of no consequence to any one in a commercial way, was enabled vicariously to enter into the sensations of the rich and powerful. A famished spider, I was permitted to sit at the centre of a golden web; and hundreds of firms in the course of a season agitated the web and warned me to run out and seize my easy prey—on my own terms.

That day five letters were dropped into the glittering net. A real estate agent, having complimented me upon being a gentleman of such luxurious tastes that I could not possibly

do without a residence in both town and country, felt sure that I should like to purchase on alluring terms a fine old estate on Long Island. I concurred in this sentiment of the agent. A wine merchant begged the privilege of reminding me that I had not yet enjoyed at my dinner table some of his finest grades of wines; otherwise I would have opened an account with him which he now insisted that I do; and on the list of his vintages he had made his personal little pencil mark opposite *Mouton Rothschild.* I upheld this contention of the wine dealer. And even a pencil mark which connected me with anything called Rothschild was a stimulant. Even though it were but a wine called mutton. Even had it been mutton called wine. A third letter was from a general agency which stated that it was prepared to do everything. But I thought that an agency prepared to do everything was prepared to do too much. A fourth letter was addressed to my wife. It conveyed to her the intelligence that her name had been placed on a favoured list of charge-persons; and that upon "visiting the emporium" she would merely be put to the

trouble of mentioning her name to the saleslady and of buying whatever she liked. I bowed myself to the dust before this distinction accorded my spouse. Still it was rather disquieting to have even a manufactured wife thus publicly designated as a charge-person; it almost suggested that a real wife might become a charge. The last letter was signed with the formidable name of Lucile. The writer stated that having held various positions of a secretarial character, she had now opened an office of her own and was prepared to put the manuscript of inexperienced young authors into shape to secure their acceptance from the leading publishers at the highest rates of royalty: she gave these manuscripts, she announced, an unprejudiced reading and supplied ideas to strengthen and embellish. I acknowledged with humbleness the amazing wisdom and goodness of Lucile.

These gallantries sometimes led me to wonder what would have become of the remnant of Don Quixote's brain, had he armed himself and ridden forth toward the chivalries of New York trade. What might have been the fate

of a tradesman now and then as the Don ran him through with the spear that knew no shams ?

May I now proceed to say that I leased what is called a bachelor apartment, though why bachelor is not quite clear. On what ground should a tenant be required to pay for an objectionable epithet affixed to his abode? If his legal domicile must be defined with reference to the nuptial bond, why not unmarried apartment? Better unmarried than bachelor even for an apartment. A bachelor is a mere act of Providence ; being unmarried is a state of grace.

My apartment was at the rear of a magnificent structure, all the family apartments of which were at the front ; so that the aggregation could have been regarded as the house of lords and the house of commons : the lords to the front and the commons to the rear. I was then a very junior member of the house of commons. My apartment consisted of a front door, a hallway, a cranny dubbed kitchenette, an inquisitorial bath, and two rooms, in one of which I was expected to sleep and in the other not to sleep. If I had taken a position midway of my

hall, extended my right arm toward the front door, my left arm toward the bath, my right leg toward the room in which I remained conscious, and my left leg toward the room in which I remained unconscious, I might accurately have been described as occupying my apartment. The whole space had the size of one room in the old Southern farm-house which was my birthplace. As a child, I had been accustomed to partition that: in one corner was a stable, in another a garden, in a third a battlefield, and in the fourth a creek, where I sat on the foot of the bed and fished.

I now turned on the water for my bath. It trickled through the pipes slowly and was too warm to refresh; so that in the kitchenette I chipped off a piece of ice from my daily costly lump and dropped it in. One extravagance I could not deny myself—to bathe in my own melted ice. No torture of thirst within could deter me from this cutaneous magnificence outside. While the tub filled, I slipped off the clothes of the day and got into my bathrobe and laid out fresh linen on my bed. Then I threw myself into an easy-chair—easy as to the

manufacturer's model, but uneasy as to giving way under the sitter's weight—and with my eyes shut I listened to that satirical trickle from the watershed of the Adirondacks. It was my nearest approach to the forest melody of swift water, to some cold stream surrounded by moisture and greenness over which ferns leaned, and near which a wood-thrush breathed softly on his wood-viol.

I had my bath and put on my fresh clothes, and then laid out the things for my dinner ; for I was my own butler and set my own dinner-table. This was a card-table covered with green baize and upheld by four folding legs. In the case of any four things in this world, one of them would be somehow wrong ; and one of my four folding legs had a permanent fold—the growing incurable ailment of a leg. The baize was not all greenness either, as of yore, but had its yellows and browns of upsets and downfalls.

The business of setting my table brings into notice the richest furnishings of my establishment. This was the family plate, I being the family ; and you must know about my dishes.

Though a book lover, I collect no costly books nor ever shall, whatever wealth the future may have in store. Books to me are souls. Souls in this world must have bodies, and books must be bound. But my affection for a human soul goes out most freely to it when it is most simply dressed. Can any one love a monarch glittering on his throne? Let a king be uniformed as a common soldier; and if he is ever to win the love of human hearts, he will win it then—as fighting man and human equal. So a great book to me is no longer approachable, lovable, when swaddled in another man's tinsel. Why should a pilgrim, reverently on his way toward the soul of a book, be bidden to stop and worship its coat and pantaloons, designed by a nobody? Why set such antiquarian store on the vanities of any book-tailor? What was Aldus but a book-tailor? What was Elzevir but a costumier, to be ranked no higher than other designers of fashion plates? Who wants his Socrates tricked out like an actor strutting the stage or incrusted like an archbishop overlording it at the altar? Who cares to have his light of the Gospels illuminated by dark fingers?

Let Horace be garbed in his poems for all time as what he was on his Sabine farm in his own day—a soul of unaffected gentlemanliness and fastidious simplicity.

But glass and china! Here is no question of souls, but of bodies only. Your finest piece of glass has no spirit; your richest dish lies below the level of emotion; and so you may starve even your own spirit to buy these objects of mere fragile bodily beauty. That is why I often went without a meal for the sake of buying a dish.

This buying habit had begun very naturally. I had arrived in New York with one treasure, a massive old silver tankard which was all that fell to me out of the wreck of family fortunes. That tankard once symbolized the manners and customs of whole people and period, it being the huge hearty cup which was freshly filled and offered first to the arrived guest and was then passed from lip to lip among the members of the household in which his life, his comfort, his character had become sacred.

Around this cup of good-will and good cheer and of simpler faith in simpler men I had built

my scant collection. In one of the famous establishments on Fifth Avenue, on the second floor, I found a rack on which were exposed for sale odd pieces, remnants from breakage of glass and china. And here, waiting for me, I discovered my morning coffee cup—deep, man-satisfying, hero-nurturing. If Wotan had drunk coffee instead of mead, this should have been his cup. Such curvature of the rim there was to fit a big eager immortal mouth ; such a true Walhalla handle through which to push an immortal forefinger until it met an immortal thumb. This cup that same day attached to its service a well-set-up cream-pitcher—an elf of a pitcher cut of Nibelung—a gold-digging imp who must henceforth bring to me on his back every morning a jug of golden cream.

I pass over luncheon with the mere mention of one magnificent plate (the only one I had), no doubt patterned and glazed for an English duke : it being of the finest English china and designed to hold the juiciest of Southdown chops : the duke got the chops, but I got the china.

As to dinner I had a truly royal plate for

game. In the bottom was painted a scene of the autumn fields—a patch of brown grass, and half-hidden in the grass a quail. I might explain that the painted quail was the only game that ever appeared in the bottom of my plate. I had established in the basement ten floors down a precarious cooking arrangement with the janitor ; and many fuliginous things rose to me from the smoky pit.

But I had always shrunk from the spectacle of blithe Bob White's arriving at my window lattice by means of so solemn and stately a catafalque. Instead of devouring him, I felt that I would have been converted into a mourner at his obsequies. As for other game, any bird smaller than a quail I was too large to eat ; and any bird larger than a quail I was too small to buy. At my present rate of gunning I had made a calculation that I might, as a literary marksman, begin to bring down grouse at forty-five and possibly report turkey at sixty years of age.

For after-dinner hours I had two German drinking-cups, each of which represented a gold stag in the act of executing a high jump under

the boughs of a golden pine-tree in a golden German forest. It was a very short jump, but it was all gold while it lasted.

For midnight my collection embraced some dishes and mugs, very jolly, very cheap, for a rarebit with friends. There was no beauty here, but something better than beauty—ugliness; to remind all guests that beauty in glass and china, as beauty in life, can only go so far: that it never reaches any final goal. Always there is a station on every road where beauty comes to the end of its journey: beyond it begins a better world, where good-looking and bad-looking are of no consequence in the presence of the great ultimate realities—kindness, loyalty, good humour, good sense, and good principles.

One last piece—prized next to the silver tankard heirloom. It, too, was a plate—and here beauty came back again. A scene was painted in the bottom of the plate, a summer day with a soft light resting on high grassy meadows. Beyond the meadows ravines sank darkly into abysses. Beyond the ravines blue, misty mountains soared upward to snow-peaks

lost in the clouds. In the foreground of the scene a brook ; and sitting on the grass with her eyes on the brook a maid : sweet breathed, I know, sweet faced, sweet hearted. She was bare-headed, bare-necked, and her heavy braids fell down her back. On her bare feet, which were stretched out straight before her on the grass, were peasant shoes ; her hands dropped forgotten in her lap ; her bodice was blue like a blue morning-glory and her skirt of soft rose-colour like her cheeks. She sat there, tender and alone in her high Alpine valley. Was she waiting for her lover—waiting to answer him that day ? Or had he just left her, had she already answered ? And as she now watched the swift stream rushing down toward her from the glaciers above, was she thinking that her girlhood would go by yet more swift ? That plate I never put to base uses ; it was more than china.

When I had set my table, I took up the paper and began to look for reviews of books and notes about authors. Through those dry pastures I browsed with a hunger that was

beyond all pang of flesh—the fierce hunger for fame. Then came an interruption. It was occasioned by the back-elevator boy with my usual evening loaf: the long brown loaf of bread in the short brown paper bag. He always held the loaf by the bread-end and handed me the bag-end. That was the end I ate, the pure-food end; and often I wished that he might have had less politeness, that I might have had more loaf.

A few minutes later I heard sounds approaching from the cooking pit. They suggested that a rampant animal was steadily on his way to me, and that steel and concrete could not check the fury of his advance. The noises grew louder until they reached the window of my kitchenette; there was a violent struggle to enter, and then a cessation of effort: the danger had arrived, but could not get in: may it be so with all my dangers!

It was the dumb-waiter with my dinner. And hail here to the memory of that dumb-waiter, the only perfect one! He came when he was summoned; he went when he was dismissed; he did not listen while he waited; he

had no grasping but ungrateful palm ; he spoke no language impolite ; he belonged to no union ; he could not strike ; and he was a good smoker. Hail to him !

Dumb as he was he contrived to bring me a dinner that surpassed him in dumbness. The individual dish-covers, as I lifted them off, revealed substances which wore no dietary expression. And they arrived at the appropriate hour, inasmuch as twilight is held to be the mildest hour of the day. My meal shared the placidity of the dusk : it was the hushed vespers of the appetite.

Ravenous as always, I ate and craved more. Afterwards, placing the empty dishes in the dumb-waiter, I jerked the rope for it to descend; and then in glorious freedom of mind and body I lighted my pipe and drew my easiest chair to the windows.

The true luxury, richness, splendour of my apartment, far beyond my family plate, consisted in views from windows. One, quite small, opened on a street and disclosed a church opposite. The spire was on a level with my eyes. There was a little tower where the

church bell hung and where a small ex-congregation of pigeons met, my prayerless, sermonless pigeons. How joyously they scattered when the bell pealed for prayers! And how they disappeared entirely at the call to the sermon!

But my best windows opened to south-west. There the fresh breezes of summer entered. From there I could look across the city into the twilight sky and greet the Evening Star and watch the new moon come out and go down behind the city's jagged sky-line. That sky-line sometimes made me think of it as the Wolf of the World lying on his back with his mouth open and his fangs showing. A long path of silvery haze far below showed me where Broadway ran through its demoniac fires; and farther southward—high up in the air as though it belonged neither to earth nor heaven—was the great clock towards which millions turned their eyes: countenance of their pleasures, dial of their sorrows, slipping chain of their mortality.

Many a time, sitting at one of these windows with the evening light in the sky, I would remember how in years gone, when I was a boy, it fell on the farm; this same evening light

fell on the darkening fields and woods; on members of the family as they came in one by one for the night. Such memories! That was always the hour when I grew lonesomest; and then it was that I thought most solemnly of how strangely it had come about that I, instead of being on the farm still to move round and round its small boundaries all my years and measure my length at last there with my forefathers of the soil—how strangely it had come about that I should be at a window in New York, remembering it as a place not meant for me: my purpose being set to climb those human heights which long had beckoned to me in the distance, and ever as I travelled toward them beckoned as far off still.

I smoked that night until it grew night, and around the horizon a million lights of the city were set to twinkle. I had no thought of how the light of the evening sky fell on the green land, but on the grey stretches of the sea and on an ocean steamer rushing away through the waves. In the wake of that steamer my spirit followed like a gull, asking for but a crumb on the waters. I pictured with agony details: the

gorgeous dining-saloon ; the gay diners ; their tables loaded with flowers of last remembrance from the land : the dimly lighted decks ; the long row of steamer-chairs, each with its shawl, and on the shawl some book—perhaps the work of some happy, prosperous author—himself on board.

This, then, was the downfall of the day, its overthrow, its demolition. At sunrise I had said that a man's fairer deed finds a fairer day. It had not turned out thus for me : the fair day had been most unfair. Instead of bringing my betrothal it had brought alienation ; for closer companionship with her it had given absence ; her faith in me had been turned into doubt ; I had offered her my best and she had made it the worst ; all that at daybreak I had, by night I had lost.

One thing only I had gained : in the wrench of parting, in the grief of casting me off, some kind of confession had been torn from her : she loved me—of that I felt sure now—she *had* loved me !

I got up at last and went to my writing-desk

and kindled my light, and for a while sat looking at the top of that poor bare table. A soldier standing at its edge might thus have looked over his battle-field of the morrow : on it he must either go down to defeat or the forces opposed to him go down to theirs. On that desk, now more than ever, it was for me to win her.

I surveyed it as never before—it and the little things that hung about it as its whole equipment : these were five. Tacked to the wall with an iron tack was a five-cent calendar : that stood for Time. Hanging beside this on an iron nail was a small stone face of a heathen god with bandaged eyes : he stood for the sightless, pitiless Power of the Eternal in the universe. Next hung a photograph of Balzac —a monstrous extravagance to my pocket— Louis Boulanger's portrait of him in his snow-white working robe : that stood for Toil and Poverty and Genius. Near by lay a penholder which some friends had brought me one summer from England, made of sweet stout cedar : that stood for the land of English classics, the home of the Anglo-Saxon masterpiece.

These, then, were my standards, my colours,

set up about my battle-fields; these the aged Sentinels holding around me their grim Bivouac: Time—Destiny—Toil and Poverty—Genius—Art!

There was one object more: out in front of the others, standing solitary on a projection of my desk, as on some little promontory beside that unknown troubled sea, was a small bronze figure of a girl. Her figure was bent slightly forward so that her eyes, being downcast, rested on my writing-paper. High above her head in one hand she held a lamp. The rays of it also shone full on the spot where her eyes rested—on my paper.

She stood for Love bearing a Light.

This statuette had come into my possession that spring. I eked out the means to livelihood by taking private pupils; and one day I had gone to two of them for lessons. They were brothers from my country who had come to New York to make their way; and they had night positions at some kind of work and slept the first half of the day and studied the other half. They had regarded me with special favour as their tutor, inasmuch as they were not always

supplied with funds; and I, not being supplied either, but being from their part of the world, could patriotically afford to wait. Patriotically or not, I often waited.

That day they were prepared to give me my due, and rich with earnings in my pocket I set out on my return. My course lay through a residential quarter of the city where, in the northward sweep of trade, homes are giving way to shops; and near the middle of the block I saw, waving far out across the side-walk, the New York tricolour of financial ruin—the red and white and black flag of the auctioneer. It announced a furniture sale in a dismantled house where perhaps a family had managed to hold together through one last winter — then could hold together no longer.

Now, ordinarily the only justification of my presence in an auction room would have been to put myself up to the highest bidder in order that I might reap the benefit at once of whatsoever small sum I might bring. But that day, feeling the power and spirit of adventure which comes from earnings in one's pocket, I followed the flag and entered.

At one end of the suite of parlours, on a platform, sat the auctioneer, and below him the apathetic and discouraging bidders. As I entered he interrupted himself to announce that if any one wished to bid on any object, it would be put up at once. For a while I loitered to study the human nature of the scene and then turned to walk out; but at the front door the attendant, looking a little mortified, offered a final inducement: there were things upstairs. Loath to hurt any man's feelings by refusing even to look at furniture which I could not buy, upstairs I went; and there in a rear room, under thick dust, abandoned to its fate, I found this statuette of the finest French bronze.

Her lamp was empty that day, but with upstretched arm she still held it high. Her eyes looked out upon defeat, but their expression remained pledged to victory. Old ties had come to an end there, humanity itself had failed; but she lived on—fresh, charming, irresistible, victorious, supreme—an immortal ideal amid a mortal ruin.

She still waited there to serve, but with none to require her service. The sight touched me.

I thought of her as a young traveller of old, wandering into some slave market, might have found a beautiful young slave whom misfortune had bereft of her master and whom the hardened buyers, sated with slaves of their own, did not care to purchase.

The attendant, quick to read my face, asked whether I should like to have the piece put up at once. I said I should, and downstairs we went with it. There it made no appeal to any one else and passed into my possession ; and that night it found its place on my desk as my lamp. At once I, amid the battling realities of daily life, forgot it, forgot even the mood which had led me to buy.

But we may dwell amid our lifeless surroundings indefinitely, without realizing all that they can mean to us : this depends upon changes in ourselves. Long we dwell even with the living, never knowing *what* they mean : only after we need them will we understand them : when we need to the uttermost, they will be understood to their uttermost. This experience now befell me. I sat there that evening, as I have said, taking account as never before of my desk and

the poor appointments : on the eve of a greater conflict than I had ever waged. And that day there had come into my life a new loneliness : all that living woman could mean to me had gone away—in anger and distrust of me. Now as I struck a match and kindled the lamp, a new significance flashed upon me from that guardian torch.

I was like the prisoner who, on the first day of walking through the few rays of sunlight his prison afforded, saw springing up through the bricks a flower : which thenceforth took root in his soul, nourishing the soul it was rooted in. I was like another prisoner who, as his hand one day groped along the dark wall of his cell, found there — what he had never found before — a crucifix left by some one who had poured faith out over it until prayer ceased.

I now sat with my heart leaping up into that flame above my desk. It was as if on the day she went away changed toward me there had come in her place an image that stood for what she had been of old and that was changeless. Here before my eyes was her grace, her slenderness ; the bared neck, the half-bared arm ; the

masses of hair gleaming with the dawn; the gaiety, the sweetness, the purity.

I sat there looking at it. It brought into my love of her a new element—that emotion which haunts those lonely shores where worship is born and must ever dwell. With this image of her before me I almost came face to face with the tenderness, the splendour, of Religion.

She stood there waiting—alive, conscious, impatient. Her eyes rested on my writing-paper; there she cast the rays of her light—waiting.

I stretched out my hand for the pen and began the story.

CHAPTER II

The very opening of the story swept away all ground for the distress which *she* had caused herself and had caused me through belief that I had meant to make use of her life as material for my fiction ; that I, as the gay young Judas of American Novelists, meant to sell her to the world in the market-place of literature for so many pieces of silver—perhaps for very few.

The scene of the story did not lie in the North, but in the South, in my own country where she had never been. The period of the story did not fall within her own lifetime, but lay three generations back, before even her father and mother had been born. She might have as reasonably been offended with Chateaubriand for writing *Paul and Virginia* ; as well have taken alarm lest living Americans should

mistakenly identify her as Scheherazade in *The Arabian Nights.*

Certainly she could not have felt aggrieved that I should have had my own grandmother. I had to have a grandmother. Nor could she have been so ungenerous as to object to my grandmother's having gone to my grandmother's own school. Yet it was solely to my grandmother and to her having been educated—of course, very badly educated—that I owed the origin of my romance. In this wise :—

Among my earliest recollections was that of travelling from country to town and home again in the family carriage with a negro driver and a negro footman out on the box-seat. I envied the footman and ached to push him off his cushions : I desired to sit outside beside the driver, between the lamps, and occasionally to handle the reins ; and especially in wet weather to jump over the wheel into the mud to open gates. It had not escaped me that the jumping into the mud in his best clothes always amused the footman, and I did not see why jumping into the mud with my best clothes would not amuse me ; and I wished to be amused. This

kind of energy being denied me, I was forced to ride inside, where my greatest activity consisted of trying to grind the wool off a sheepskin rug in the bottom of the carriage as I stood at the window, questioning my grandmother about every object on the roadside that could possibly be investigated. The more numerous the questions, the better pleased my grandmother, whose chief interest in life lay in answering all questions propounded by everybody. At home in the family circle if every one grew worn out and refused to entertain my grandmother with more questions, she would herself begin to propound them to the company and continue her entertainment. My mother had too many young children to heed their questions. They might clamour at her apron strings for hours without disturbing her tranquil thoughts; nevertheless if any one of us asked a question worth answering, no doubt she never failed to answer it—and wisely.

One day, I being in the carriage with my grandmother, as we drew near the little rustic town which was our great city, and the fine old woodlands through which the turnpike ran

became lawns and residences, I observed at the very edge of town that my grandmother leaned forward in her seat and looked out of the window on her side of the carriage : she always sat on that side. I suddenly remembered that I had repeatedly seen her do this before. She bent over that day and looked out at a large building, the largest I had ever beheld. As I now think of it, it stood there, a kind of Gothic castle with battlemented turrets and diamond-paned windows ; with ivy clambering over its walls, brown as with the mould of centuries ; with honeysuckle massed about the lower windows. The whole place seemed to harbour the scholarly seclusion of a dim mediæval cloister. Venerable forest trees were grouped about it ; silken bluegrass flowed deep over the lawn ; it was a paradise for birds. Noble it stood there that day, unlike the ignoble things springing up around it ; for the lawn was being cut into building lots, and ugly modern houses began to vulgarize it on the right and the left.

Perhaps that was the reason why, as my grandmother looked at it that day, a mist of tears gathered in her merry old eyes. I followed

her glance and noted emotion as a child quickly does :—

"What is that place, grandmother ?"

"It is a boarding-house. That is where I went to school."

"O grandmother !" I cried, looking up at her incredulously, "did you go to school in a boarding-house ?"

"When I went to school there, it was not a boarding-house. It was a boarding-school, a female seminary. That is where I graduated."

"O grandmother !" I cried, "did you ever graduate ?"

Graduation, I thought, was tribulation reserved for hardened, mischievous boys. Now I saw the world was going to turn out to be a hard place for everybody, both girls and boys being able to scrape through by the hardest.

"Of course I graduated," replied my grandmother, a little indignant even at me.

"What did you graduate *in* ?"

I had already made up my mind that I would graduate in as little as possible ; I might tread in my grandmother's steps. In the family

she was reputed to be very saving, and she might have been economic about graduating.

"I graduated in arithmetic — just barely. And there was a little algebra, but that was dreadful—they hushed it up about my algebra. And in natural philosophy—very easily : I flew through natural philosophy. And in rhetoric, of course. And in penmanship. And in French. And in botany. And in painting. And in music. And in deportment. And in my petticoats!" added my grandmother, laughing. "I was a highly accomplished young lady!"

"O grandmother!" I cried, "did you graduate in petticoats? How funny!"

"I graduated in as many as I could put on, and in those days we could put on a good many when we did our best," said my grandmother, brushing tears of merriment out of her eyes. "I had on sky-blue kid boots laced up my ankles and a dotted Swiss muslin flounced to the waist; and a lace bertha and a hoop-skirt and a broad blue sash fastened with a rosette on my left shoulder and sweeping across my breast——"

"Didn't it sweep across your back?"

My grandmother laid her hand on mine to suggest no more interruptions :—

"My hair was curled in ringlets with a heated poker ; I had artificial pink roses sparkling with glass dew-drops pinned behind my ear on one side and three bands of pink satin ribbon running through my hair in front. I carried a hemstitched handkerchief and a white ivory fan."

"O grandmother ! How did you look ? "

"I looked perfectly beautiful ! " said my grandmother, triumphantly. "Don't you still see that I looked perfectly beautiful ? "

I studied my grandmother's face carefully.

"Grandmother," I said, "I do not. Far from it ! "

"Well, perhaps there *have* been some changes," said my grandmother, laughing indulgently. "And perhaps your taste is not fully formed either—like the rest of you." My grandmother had a power of vigorous speech which she handled on people with wonderful enjoyment—to herself.

"What did you do when you graduated ? "

"I stood by the piano on the chapel stage

and sang a beautiful song called 'I'd offer thee this hand of mine.' Then I read my composition. Then I received my diploma. And in the midst of all these honours I never failed to use my handkerchief and my fan," said my grandmother, tickled at her own candour.

"What was the subject of *your* composition?"

I fear there was impoliteness in my voice. My own compositions at school were a great source of pride to me: I thought them fine. And I was not edified now that my grandmother had exercised the family gift long before I appeared upon the scene to exercise it myself.

My grandmother opened her beaded reticule and nibbled a nutmeg. To this day I do not know which brings up her presence more vividly: her own daguerreotype or the scent of ground nutmeg. She was immensely entertained:—

"My composition was on the Pleasures of Old Age."

I clapped my hands:—

"Then you *were* old, weren't you? I *knew* you must have been old!"

"When I had finished reading my composition, a shower of bouquets descended on me. One of them was thrown by a young farmer. He had thick chestnut curls and a beautiful moustache, and he was scented with bergamot: I *know*! After we had gone out on the lawn for refreshments under the trees, he was introduced to me, and we fell in love with each other as soon as we touched each other's hands. My, but he was handsome and eager and ardent! And how I loved him! How I loved him!"

"What became of him, I wonder!"

"He is your grandfather," replied my grandmother, catching me to her heart.

"O grandmother!" I cried, "grandfather threw a bouquet at you? What a funny thing for him to do! I knew he threw other things at people, but I never knew he threw flowers. I thought he didn't like flowers."

"His bouquet had a note tucked in it."

"How funny of grandfather!"

"It was not in the least funny, you will understand some day."

"I want to understand now."

My grandmother's eyes twinkled :—

"You *can't* understand now."

I thought I'd teach my grandmother a lesson :—

"And so grandfather was the only sweetheart you ever had," I remarked sagely.

In reward for which sagacity, my grandmother promptly boxed my ears. Though not concealing her amusement :—

"You are too young to talk about such things," she commanded. Then she relapsed into silence and then broke it :—

"There *was* a sweetheart before your grandfather—the music teacher of the seminary. He was the only man in the seminary, and I *had* to be in love with somebody! When he gave me singing lessons he chewed mace, and I suppose that is why I eat nutmegs."

This talk set up a rapid fermentation in my brain. After some moments, during which a yeast-like growth overflowed the juvenile basin, I offered my grandmother the result :—

"Grandmother, when I am grown, I am going to put you, and grandfather, and the seminary, and the music teacher in a book."

"Your grandfather's name and my name are already written in one Book, I hope," replied my grandmother, softly and gravely. "I hope they are written in the Good Book: that is enough! Leave us out of yours! One Book —and the Day of Judgment—will do for us!" she laughed a little prudently.

"Mine wouldn't be a bad book."

"Still I think there would be a difference; some slight difference."

"But I can't write a book if I don't have people to put in it."

"Well," said my grandmother, thumping my forehead affectionately, as though to impress upon it a reminder for all time, "when you think up your book, think up your people."

That was the origin of my story. The idea of it had been dropped as a seed into the mind of a child. It had sprouted and afterwards been nourished by other things. Through years the stem of it had been growing toward the surface of consciousness; and that morning when I awoke, there, at last, the flower of it

lay open and perfect like a lotus at sunrise on the bosom of its lake.

A story not of my grandmother, but of my grandmother's time; not of my grandfather, but of my grandfather's time. With him would go the picture of farm-life in his beautiful country, the like of which was not to be seen elsewhere in the world. With her would go the picture of girl-life in one of those romantic Boarding-Schools of the South—those Female Seminaries—those Daughters' Colleges—through the windows and portals of which streamed the best light one half of the nation then had for its picked girlhood. No such bewildering effulgence as radiates from the great colleges of the republic in our time; yet a true light leading onward, guiding upward—the best there was: and not without its sublime reward.

For the sentimental schoolgirls of those romantic seminaries became the mighty women of the Civil War, fierce Tyrtæan mothers of the South—those fighting, praying, starving, broken, dying, never-conquered, infuriated women, whose husbands, sons, lovers, brothers dyed with their blood the battle trenches of

their land and the battle trenches of the sea. Tender, romantic schoolgirls at first, poorly educated, scarcely educated at all; then Spartan women; now most revered, most majestical figures on the landscape of the nation's history. Time that breaks all moulds has broken theirs and will never use it again—one of the world's heroic moulds of womanhood.

That was my story—the time, the setting. And toward midnight there the opening of it lay before me on my desk. And through it I came back at midnight to where I had been at daybreak—with the light of something beautiful blazing in me once more. Here was something that could not misunderstand, and could not wrong me; upon it I could pour out my best and be unfettered and free. Love may wrong, Art never. The arrow of its ideal, if shot into the air, will never afterwards be found sticking in one's heart.

So in peace, but a sad peace, I slept that night—as regarded my work, but heart-broken for her. Our quarrel had been so needless: a sentence would have set it right. But we, being sensible, were foolish. Alas for the

hardships of a world in which the fools can never be sensible and the sensible can ever be fools.

Summer now set in. There was a sign of this the morning after her departure: my electric bell was touched and it responded. If you can imagine a steel grouse very much frightened and trying to get away as soon as possible on a pair of steel wings, you will form some idea of the trepidation of sound that now quivered on the silence.

It was the houseman: would I have my awnings put up? My draperies taken down? My rugs dusted and laid away from moths? I welcomed the awnings; they would shade my southern windows against the tropical glare of noons soon to come. But that courtesy as to my draperies and rugs! A creature that could have bitten into any rug of mine must have been equipped by nature with a higher order of jaws and a lower order of intelligence than any possessed by moths. A New York moth would not have accepted my rugs as a free gift. All the more it became the houseman's duty to

make his inquiry. It was not his prerogative to discriminate among tenants as to whose rugs were valuable and whose not. All of us are rubbed most sore where the coarsest things of life touch us ; and he understood human nature too well in his position not to be aware that tenants may be rubbed sore by their own coarse rugs.

Other signs of summer followed rapidly. Some of my friends began to go away for their vacations for months, as they were graded in prosperity by stretch of absence. These went : and there were left those other friends who could get away to seashore or mountains only at week-ends. Now week-ends are the lonesome ones in a New York summer, and thus these other friends now disappeared when they were most needed. No one of them ever thought of staying in the city to spend a week-end with me who could not leave at all. But it was better thus : had any one of them remained to bear me company, I should have been too awed by the spectacle of his heroism to have sat at ease in his presence. I was glad they were all normally selfish men, so that my peace of mind

might not be disturbed by them as enclosures of too many virtues.

It being the order of things to go, one day the dumb-waiter took its leave. I received word from the basement that for me cooking would be suspended until October : and that after October a restaurant would be opened—thus ending my attempts to be self-sustaining ; but in the meantime I was thus turned out of doors to look for city *tables d'hôte*.

As everything was taking its departure, the back-elevator boy joined in this recessive movement : he himself did not depart, but his draperies began to leave him. As the days grew warmer his woollens were shed as a furred animal drops its winter shag. He thus sartorially betook himself back toward the artlessness of primitive man. And when in August he attained his midsummer metamorphosis, he regularly appeared with the evening loaf as his own blend of the Baker and the Bone age.

One day the final mournful seal of summer was set for me. Passing through the street where she lived, I saw the house closed, the front door barred, the shutters drawn—empti-

ness and silence. As I walked away, most I thought of her rose-bush near the marble seat; with dews on it at dawn, with dews on it again at twilight; its buds opening one by one—and she not there.

Not everything was going; some things were coming. July was coming, and with the first week of July my royalties arrived—sixteen dollars and forty cents.

I took the cheque down to the greedy cañons of the gold miners of lower Manhattan, to the palace of a trust company. The paying teller stood at his wicket of bevelled glass and Circassian walnut—in his market-stall of avarice. Bank-notes tied in bunches of various sizes were piled about him as though they were the season's radishes and asparagus on sale; it was early, and there were few buyers as yet that day.

Before that man in his wicket thousands of his fellow-creatures filed, and he asked each of them but one question: How little, how much? That was his only measure of mankind year after year—how little gold—how much gold? He had learned to know me as the author of some unsuccessful books through the publisher's

cheques, not through the books ; and even before I had reached his window that morning, he was ready with the question—how little ? And it is possible that while he was looking at my cheque and pushing out to me what it called for, he had worked out a problem : if the interest for six months was sixteen dollars and forty cents and if the principal was ninety millions of Americans, what was the per cent levied by me on my countrymen ? How much did my books cost the nation per suffering head ?

When we parted at his window, he and I lost sight of each other, but I think we never parted without a final shot. As a bank official he was forbidden to speculate : still I think he speculated as to what became of me when I disappeared into private life. Did I by night hang myself up by my toes from the rafters of some unoccupied building and sleep economically like a bat? Many a time I would have been glad to do so. In turn, I took the liberty of taking his measure when he disappeared out of his palace: to what proportions did he shrink ? Once I fancied I saw him emptying oil on the mosquito trenches which spread their

lacustrine scenery around his box on the flats of New Jersey. And once I fancied I caught sight of him on a rocky hillside of the Bronx, on his knees in the evening light, draining with his moneyed fingers the bankrupt udders of the family goat.

But that day, as I left the bank with my pittance, never before had I come so near meeting that dread Shape which walks the streets of New York always in search of the young who have come in from the country ; for the light-hearted, the too-trustful, too-hopeful youths of each sex : the appalling Shape of Failure. She wishes but to link her arm within that of a youth—girl or boy—and whisper :—

"I am Failure. You are a failure. You do not belong in these streets ; they are for success. Come out of them with me ; drop out of sight with me down this alley."

Never had I so nearly met her as that day with that proof of my value. So that I came up town to the establishment on Fifth Avenue, where my salesman of the odd pieces always waited with a smile for an odd youth ; and I bought with the sixteen dollars a gold card-

plate, a piece looking like solid gold. I said I should lay that plate away against the time when the publisher would not mail me his check for my royalties, but would send them to me by his office boy. My butler would meet his office boy at my front-door ; and my gold card-plate would receive his gold-bearing document. In the teeth of failure that day I made this offering to Victory.

This plate completed my family collection, and with it I closed the china closet for the rest of the summer—it being necessary that I go out to dine. Nothing is too small to have consequences, and even that trivial matter brought its own. For one evening it befell me to find my *table d'hôte* in the rear yard of a little place down in the neighbourhood of the Washington Arch.

A great deal of human life lies scattered around the Arch, a wonderful commingling of lives and races ; there are French, there are Italians, there are Swiss, there are many others. The proprietor of this hostelry which I found had tried to turn his rear yard into an *al fresco* summer-evening dining ground. There were

little tables ; with a light on each that glimmered out of grape-vines. It mattered not that the grape-vines were artificial. As you looked upward, you did not see walls hung with old Flemish tapestries, but fire-escapes hung with other things that would have frightened Flanders. And if you looked on past these, you could see the infinitude of night and the cool stars : and after all, it is not what the eye must traverse, but what it finally rests on at the end of its vision that counts.

I began to go there and so made the acquaintance of the proprietor and found that he was Swiss and had been a hotel clerk in many parts of Switzerland.

Thus in after-dinner talks with him I too could spend much of my summer in Switzerland, where most I wished to be. He made it possible for me, by his descriptions, to follow her from place to place. I saw as with my own eyes the blue of Lake Leman—she was to be there ; I read under old chestnut-trees on the slopes of *Haute Savoie* ; now and then lifting my eyes to look across the lake at Lausanne, where also she was to be ; where Gibbon finished his De-

cline and Fall—and where, perhaps, I would complete mine. My host was a Savoyard, and he was always homesick for the vineyards in which he had worked as a boy, had played as a youth, had begun to dream of life as a man. It was homesickness for native vineyards that explained the artificial grape-vines clambering around his dinner-tables.

Thus as the summer rose to its zenith of power, life descended to its nadir of nothingness.

Now it was August, and the Solstice raged.

An August noon in New York! As you look down Fifth Avenue, long and straight, ablaze with light and aquiver with heat, a solitary distant figure starts to cross it, a shining figure. It is the snow-white Moslem of the city, the street-sweeper—moving not to his minaret of prayer, but to his mound of dust. Out at the Zoological Garden, in a stagnant pool, the rose-coloured heron, with head hidden under its wing, stands on one leg, like a plant in the ooze of Indian marshes, flowering magnificently. In their cages, the tigers of Siberia lie flat against opposite walls as if to be removed as far as possible from each other's

bodies: blood-heat within them, blood-heat outside. A grey squirrel, that master of nimbleness, lies stretched on a shaded rock in the reservoir wall as still as a newt, pressing its hot stomach against the cool stone. Far out in the middle of the reservoir, the surface of which is a sheet of still azure, matching the azure of the sky, a tiny boat is being pushed hither and thither as the skipper with his dip-net collects out of the blue the white feathers of gulls that have moulted. My Swiss hotel-keeper described for me the flocks of white gulls which in August float on Lake Leman. Had I been a gull that summer I think I would have moulted no feather in the reservoir of Central Park—not if I had had wings for ocean travel. On the parched slope of Riverside Drive, under a sun-smitten oak, a nurse with a closed fan drowses beside the carriage of a sleeping infant; and at her feet, curled on its back with its paws in the air, a dreaming bull-terrier snarls through his muzzle at the brazen sky. Below the group, at the foot of the slope, the great Hudson sleeps or moves toward the Bay as in a dream; and looking northward

to the hills through which it has come dreaming, you see the horizon muffled in amethyst. On the green in Central Park, on that western edge of it where stands a scant grove of oaks and maples, the Park sheep lie suffering, even in their half-grown fleeces. The gaunt old shepherd, sitting on the ground with his back against a tree where the shadow falls, keeps his eyes on them from force of habit. Beside him his young collie lies with his nose between his paws, watching also. In the eyes of the young dog is the steadiness of instinct; in the eyes of the old man lies the stillness of memories.

August twilight in New York! An orbless, flameless fury more deadly than sun-heat. As you stagger homeward, out on the steps of some unoccupied apartment building you are just able to see through the darkness there, on a stone abutment, the caretaker; a man from the tropics, a newcomer from the West Indies —black; motionless there as an Arab in the furnace of arid sands. Further on, another black man from the tropics — further on, another black man from the tropics: Lybian figures in the desert of the city night. Thus

centuries ago their race may have crouched around the marble entrances of palaces in ancient Carthage under the rule of the Cæsars.

August nights in New York!

And every night like a low star above the burning sands of life, my lamp—with its beam on my work. My only companion—that cool figure of radiant girlhood. That fragrant maid of life's dawn. That unwilted image of constancy. That flower of trust, shedding on me in my sweat and toil and discouragement and despair the freshness of an April dew-bent Narcissus.

CHAPTER III

All that summer no letter. Not a message to me from her mountains, at the foot of which grew the flower of a day and on the summits of which lay the snows of ages. Could she be touched neither by the pathos of the brief nor by the desolation of the lasting? Would she be warned neither by the glacier nor by the rose?

To confront this studied silence of hers I marshalled one hope: that clearer thought would dawn on her; that her heart would then hold out against an erring judgment; that until she had returned she would not decide irrevocably. If she would but return unpledged! All summer my heart cried to her: wait, wait, wait! Come back unpromised, come back free!

And all that summer I built and built and

built for her; all the forces within me were called upon to work for her. For it must now be divulged that while I had no thought of putting her into one book, I was secretly putting her into another.

When I arrived in New York, I was carried away by the daily spectacles of the streets. Especially at night there passed before me the procession of things seen. If you are thoughtful, you must have become aware that this is your own experience: that wherever you live, as the last thing each night your mind casts up the account of the sun. There is some saving power within you which would lay hold of that worthiest to live—the trait of strength—the act of leadership—the quality of mercy—every best thing in the world. When the members of a family come together at night around the fire, speak, and then lapse into common silence, some one will break the silence with a narrative of the day which held the wit, the gaiety, the wisdom, the justice of life.

But after I had come to know her, every night I thought of her also; and thus between

thinking of her and thinking of the most perfect little story of the day, the two became naturally acquainted: she drew the story to herself, the story drew her to itself: they belonged to each other, they grew together.

On the night of the first of January of that year I had, then, begun a book, the plan of which was that on every night throughout the year I should write down the one occurrence of the day that asserted its right to abide as the best the world had offered: and at the end of the year to make of these a sheaf of the days to send to her.

This is the story I found and wrote down the very day she sailed:—

As I wandered over the city, toward noon, it chanced that I was walking down the long avenue of elms which shade the Mall in Central Park. Near the entrance to this avenue there stands, as you may know, a bronze figure of Shakespeare. One day in the spring of 1864, when the people of this nation were at war with one another and that tragedy saddened every life, some citizens of the city yet had the breadth of nature, the long historic prospective, to meet

under the young leaves of April in the ancient sunlight and dedicate this monument of peace on the three hundredth anniversary of the birth of the poet of humanity.

The poet stands there on his pedestal. As the years go by, one of the elm trees behind him stretches out, nearer and nearer, one of its boughs as if, like a human hand, to touch his shoulder—the touch of nature. He stands there with an open book in his hand, his eyes fixed not on the book, but on the earth before him—on that dust out of which he evoked the vast throng of his human, his immortal, children.

As I drew near that day I observed, quite motionless before the statue of the poet, the figure of an elderly gentleman with a profile as keen and sharp as any on a Greek coin. He had on a soft black hat and a well-worn black lounge suit ; his linen was emphatically respectable and his shoes well cared for. His whole demeanour suggested some threadbare recluse of one of the libraries who might have come forth for a breath of fresh air from some dim alcove.

He stood looking up into Shakespeare's face, unconcerned about my approach, a sensitive but

resolute friend. As I drew nearer, his revery reached its close, and he turned away; but having gone a few steps, he stopped, as one who remembers the very purpose that brought him thither; with a smile at his own absent-mindedness he thrust his hand in his coat pocket and jerked out a white flower; and coming back close under the statue, tossed it up so that it lodged on Shakespeare's arm. For a moment he lingered, smiling at his deed, and then happier went his way. He perhaps one of the lonely in the city of millions—perhaps without a single living tie. But his heart must find something on which to lavish its affection, and so he had walked back along the high-road of history three hundred years till he reached that other heart which had understood.

That night I wrote the scene down. "It is what she would have done," I said. And forthwith I removed the scholarly recluse from the story and put her in his place: I saw her as tossing a white flower of remembrance towards Shakespeare's eyes.

The climax of the whole summer occurred one Saturday in the last week of August.

The night had been too hot for sleep. Dawn brought no breeze. The sun as it rose flashed on no dew. My sheep in the Park, if they cropped the grass, found it warm and dry as their wool. As I got out of bed to lower the window awnings the cloth felt as though a hot iron had just been passed over it.

Human nature in me came to an end that day, work would be impossible, there stretched out a strange prospect of idleness, of a holiday —my one holiday during those scorching months. As I resolved to take one, instantly all that was in me turned toward the sea—my arms, my face, my breast, my feet longed for the cold sea. I was twenty years old, a dweller in a pasture land, before I had ever seen the great mother of mankind. Only in stories, in history, had I heard the Ocean. It was a year or two before this that one summer twilight, awe-stricken and breathless, I had first drawn near the edge of the rolling wonder of the rolling planet, the cradle of our race,—the story of our wanderings—the symbol of our hope.

Idle for a while that morning, I stood at my windows, looking out on the roofs. A skylight

was pushed open, and a scullery-maid climbed out and crept over to a little wooden stool near a smoking chimney-top. She carried a bottle of cleansing fluid and some scraps of cloth in one hand and in the other a pair of pink ball slippers ; and seating herself, she began merrily to clean the toe of one of the slippers : the universe that morning was reduced to a point—to the soiled toe of that slipper. After a while she drew out a letter, her eyes devoured it. The hot kitchen smoke issued a few feet away and drifted across her face ; she was unaware. The sun poured down its flame on her head ; it was unnoticed. Hard work, coarse work, meant nothing. Her ugliness meant nothing. She may not have asked of life very much, but the little she asked she got : that night on the deck of a steamer on the moonlit Hudson or in some pavilion at the edge of the Atlantic she would be dancing with the writer of that letter. Frowsy, ragged, glorious little scullion—with her slippers and her lover.

She had noticed me standing at my windows with a proprietor's full right to enjoy the view : what did she care ? Every housetop might

have been crowded with observers, and she would have sat there undisturbed, cleansing her slipper toes and dreaming of her waltz.

Turning away with a pang at the contrast between the story there and the one within me, I went across to the north side of my apartment, where a small window disclosed a glimpse of a street and a church. In the belfry of a church my flock of pigeons sat listless ; they scarce preened their feathers ; and some sat out on the mouths of the gargoyles as if to be as near as possible to the gushing shower whenever it should arrive. Presently a huge pouter pigeon, which did not belong to the flock of my meek ones, alighted, and strutting officiously about began to push them over the precipices. Then he flew out to the gargoyles and pushed those off. I said he was a parson pigeon—thinking himself entitled to strut and tyrannize because Nature with a sense of humour had made him a pouter. Never do I see the gargoyles of the church without suspecting it is not the church only that needs gargoyles : the church members should have gargoyles also —to wash them off—to drain away their soot.

Something occurred to end my fancies about the pigeons. The rattle of a wagon was heard, the whistle of a youth; the wagon stopped opposite, the youth jumped down from the driver's seat, and hurrying to the rear of his wagon began to pile loaves of bread into a basket. His cap was set on the back of his head to display to advantage his thick-curled foretop; his clean shirt-sleeves were rolled halfway back, revealing his goodly arms. As he grasped his basket and turned toward the house, his whistle was checked, he stood still. Moving slowly down the street, with one hand sliding along the church fence and with the other grasping a cane which tapped the sidewalk, came a stranger smitten with eyes of perpetual night; before the church doors he paused and groped.

The lad softly put down his basket and with slow, reverential footsteps went over and took him by the arm: he needed no introduction except that of humanity. Removing his own cap, he led him into the church. A moment later he reappeared, sprang for his basket, delivered his loaves, jumped to his seat, and was gone.

It was early that morning, yet I wrote this story down as the pastel of the day, persuaded I should see nothing more fit. Besides, when night fell, I should be far away. When she read it, mayhap it would help her to remember a blind youth who dwelt opposite the church—blinded by Love: and mayhap she might decide to come to him and guide him to the altar.

In the afternoon, under the steel roof of the vast station where the detonations of engines as they pulled in and drew out shattered the drum of the ear, I sat at the window of an overcrowded train—on my way to the ocean. Men with hats off, coats off; shopgirls with wilted waists, wilted faces. At last the train drew out and shot across the reedy marshes and hot sands; sometimes along a road-bed with sun-baked vines crawling as over an earth furnace; at spots scrub-oak blasted by fires, and low pine withered by smoke and flame. Then hours later the low level moors and the first cool breath of air through the coaches; and then from my window far off I saw the evening sky fretted with still clouds of green and gold; and under them the

level shoreward billows of the cold sea—the blue and silver sea.

At a small hotel I engaged for the night one of the smallest of the rooms, and as I opened it paused to survey its luxury : a cheap wash-stand, on the rack of which hung two little pink-bordered ragged towels ; a pitcher with a broken handle suggested a one-winged penguin sitting upright and disconsolate on its eggless nest ; on the floor a small quadrilateral oilcloth, at the edges of which only the eye could trace a pattern ; on an iron bedstead a white counterpane —not white ; across one wall a drapery of faded chintz under which no doubt were nails where clothing might be hung ; here and there over the carpet the huge discolorations of orgies. As quickly as possible and with great gladness of heart I locked the room in and locked myself out.

I had my dinner in a restaurant on a side street and then walked out to the promenade which stretches for miles between the city and the sea. I was one of a hundred thousand souls in the place that August Saturday night ; and two currents of souls, one passing southward

and the other passing northward, met and mingled. I turned southward and began the long walk—very slowly and observantly—along that thoroughfare of the invitations: past the long sea-invading piers flashing with their myriad electric lights—past the shops offering the wares of the world—past the music-stands and past music where there was no stand—past the little dens of the credulities—past the bowling-alleys—past the candy shops and the fish shops—past all the tests of strength that one saw and past all the tests of strength that one did not see.

I walked alone, yet I think not alone, for I prayed that she walk with me.

At last I reached the end of the promenade, and descending the steps, reached the wide, hard, sloping floor of the sea and went on—till the last cottage had been passed—the open-air hospital for children—the summer resting-place for tired mothers. Farther and farther along that hard, clean floor of the sea, on one side the breaking billows, on the other the land.

The country along there is sand-dunes rising in hillocks. There is scrub oak, scrub evergreen,

creepers that can stand salt spray, dwarfed bushes with leaves as pungent as brine, even blackberry bushes. Where the dunes front the surf, they are highest, having been piled up by winds and tides and drifting sands and held in place by the fastnesses of vegetation.

Under one of these, the edge of which was overhung by a bramble of blackberries, where the sand was clean with only a black tuft of seaweed here and there and white shells, I stopped and looked back : far behind me lay the city, its lights barely visible, all its noises lost.

I had around me the ancient open of Nature. And I threw myself at ease down on the sand.

The moon was rising : the rim of the disc looked like some dull red mountain top at infinite distance ; then slowly the entire orb disengaged itself from the tossing waters. Its path of light began to strike across the tops of the spray and I began to see, breaking before me on the sand, the fragile laces of the waves. One behind another, one behind another, one behind another, ever the same, ever the same, before me, a youth, as they were before some youth

who watched them unknown thousands of years before. Higher rose the moon, the sky where the stars flashed thick became violet-dark. All the sand turned to silver, the sea took on a blacker violet, its laces formed and dissolved like snow. I there, watching it all; sometimes turning my face to the bushes overhead through which I found now and then some fainter star.

The vast, solemn, lonely beauty of the night!

. . . . . .

Slowly I walked toward the edge, little by little delaying the luxury; deeper I waded in until one breaker leaped against me with its foam. Then with out-thrown arms of impatient joy I plunged forward and swam.

Long I revelled in my strength in that wild energy. Then far out where the surface was more still I turned and crossed my arms under my head and crossed my feet and gave myself up to that bosom of all tenderness and all storm — letting the tide bear me landward. The moonlit drops flashed and broke over the swimmer. The ocean became as a golden couch—a tenderness of the old mother to him: no other golden bed had he.

I did not return to my hotel, not to that room, not to the bed there. I made me a pillow of my coat and with the green boughs of the brier as my roof and the waves breaking a few feet away and the night wind cool upon me, I lay down.

. . . . . .

So few things I had with me there: stars and moon, the sea and the sound of it, the wind, the sand, the green thorn, summer and darkness. All the rest I put away from me—the city up the beach and what the city plenteously, too plenteously, offered to its hundred thousand revellers. That I might be alone and into my solitude draw her nearer to me across the distance.

I there with solemn beauty of the summer night: calling to her, calling, calling, calling. Before me the ceaseless wash of the ocean; within me the ceaseless breaking, breaking, breaking of all my nature shoreward to her out of the deeps.

Calling, breaking—calling, breaking. Until worn out to weariness I slept.

. . . . . .

Long afterwards, I awoke, or half-awoke, and with open, or half-open, eyes I saw not the moon, now high in the heavens shining down on the Atlantic, but that sea of dreams—that older sea of love between Sestos and Abydos —the Hellespont—the sea of Leander and Hero.

At summer twilight I saw Leander come down to the edge of the Hellespont and gaze across the strait. Then winding his mantle about his head to keep it dry above the waves, for a while he looked for the signal of the star that was to flash out from Hero's isolated tower beset with rocks and noises of the sea. Even while he waited the light flashed and he knew that Hero watched.

As I sank back into slumber I thought how all that summer no beam had reached me from a dark shore. Only the bronze statuette on my desk set the star of night to shine on the troubled sea of my romance.

She was the Hero of that summer—and the heroine.

When I awoke again, the east was rosy, the level billows of the sea broke grey at

my feet, the moon was gone, the lights of the city were out, above it stood the Morning Star.

I swam again as the sun sent its first golden light across the grey waves.

THIRD PART

THE GETTING HOME

CHAPTER I

One day a wall of a rare old house in a beautiful quarter of the city glowed dark-red. The vine of mighty muscles twisted about her windows was burning its cool forest fires : the year at wane had come at last to October.

I had not endured to see the place since that mournful day of early summer when it stood closed, darkened, empty. But a wistful afternoon it was no longer possible to resist wandering by ; and what first drew the eye in the distance down the street was that vine with its autumn promise. And the house now waited : the front doors had been unbarred ; the front steps were fleckless ; the brass of knob and knocker shone with the distinction between brass and brassiness ; the window-panes had a diamond-like brilliancy ; the curtains inside hung

fresh. Almost her hands parted them, her face almost looked out. Even the tall vases, one on each side of the steps, had had their soil renewed and were brimming with forget-me-nots—the most impatient of flower faces. As she got out of her carriage (she kept her carriage and would not use a motor car), she would pause to touch them—a little custom of hers sometimes after a longer absence.

I went home wild with joy and with one troubled thought: what would be her greeting? For it was certain that she would arrange in some non-committal way to see me at least once: there were things she would wish to know. Her reception of me would definitely depend upon whether she returned free or pledged. I thought I should know instantly. The first expression of her eye, the first word, tone, touch, would divulge the truth.

It is easier to wait by the month than by the hour; and with the certainty that she might arrive any hour there was yet an interminable week to drag by. Too restless to work, I began to wander over the city, proving to myself by this sign and by that sign that

October really had come, already was going, and how needlessly she mocked the season by her absence. I made me a little Pilgrim Scrip of changes of earth and sky and city by which daily to refresh my discouraged feet.

One day in the Park, I saw many sparrows on the grass, stripping the stems of seed: all feeding together. They had only appetites now, no emotions—the law of the twain having become the law of the flock. The wings of some wore white patches, as if prophetically flecked for future snows: had it only been actual snow instead of snowlike feathers! One day out on Riverside Drive, at a bathing place between a beef-packing establishment and a dock where the city's ashes are emptied, little boys of the poor ceased to dive into the Hudson, having been gloomily gathered from buckboards to blackboards, from a living river of nature to the dry rivers of maps. One day a florist's window was blazoned with mountain oak boughs, which glowed like coals in a grate, forerunners of hoar frosts; and how gladly many times would I have given a year's royalties for a black frost. One day ripe pumpkins

appeared on the greengrocers' variegated embankments around their shop-doors. My heart warmed to one with his ruddy countenance and clean linens as he picked up a pumpkin while talking to a customer and with an upward and downward movement of his arms fondled it as though he were about to pitch it into a wagon. From those motions, I knew that he had been a country boy, had followed the wagon into the fields, had helped to load it with pumpkins when silver spangled their gold. One day the transitory summer life of the city, which had ascended to roofs and housetops, began to move downward. Washing rains, chilly winds, flapping awnings sent clarionet and cornet, viol and mandoline under cover. One night the last dinner was eaten with my Swiss host in his little back yard with its artificial grape-vines in memory of his beloved Savoy. Even as he and I lingered over our cigars, clouds rushed across the stars above our heads, drops fell on our faces, and a gust of wind blew our napkins indoors after us. I complained :—

"Surely by this time enough snow must

have fallen in the Alps to drive people home!"

At last one evening upon my return to my apartment a letter protruded beneath the hall door. I snatched it, tore it open.

They were at home, she wrote. Could I come the next afternoon for some tea?

That was all—an invitation to see *them*, for some tea, and not sent straight by messenger, but with deliberation by common post.

I saw—*them*! They were all plainly visible the following afternoon on the veranda. There was not only tea to be drunk bodily, there was a tea-party of some fifteen guests to be assimilated by the rebellious faculties. I was purposely the last guest to arrive, being of a mind to emulate her example in deliberateness; and instead of going straight, I would gladly have had myself sent by parcels-post, had it been possible to take advantage of such indirection of the Government.

Remembering how we had parted, I did not hold out my hand; but the moment she saw me she extended hers at arm's-length. She was pouring tea for some one and asking how many

lumps of sugar were desired; and she poised the sugar-tongs with a lump in them, as I went forward, and kept her hold on the sugar-tongs with two fingers, and gave me the three others. But the three others did not tell me anything: Nature for ages has developed the thumb and the forefinger for the higher needs of civilization: the three others are millions of years behind and remain what they were at the start —one's tongs; taking hold of a piece of wood or of a piece of humanity with the same deadly precision and impartiality. She gave me *her* tongs: my preference would have been that she shake hands with the sugar-tongs. Thus I found out nothing from her hand-clasp. She had been smiling before I was announced, and the smile continued with no difference. And she looked me in the eyes as though I were not there, and indeed I felt myself but a roving phantom of other days. Then bending very graciously to one side, so that she might communicate with some one behind me, by this gesture and with a nod to me, she intimated that if I would retire to a certain table and chair and tea-cup, I would find a

companion who would meet all my social requirements.

The guests were seated for their veranda tea-party in the form of a crescent. She flashed at the top of the crescent—its star. The seat designated to me was at one tip of the crescent —at the point where the new moon ceased : on all sides of me but one reigned nonentity. Unimportant as my arrival was, it seemed by general understanding to complete the afternoon social orchestra, which, thereupon, entered upon the rendition of a stated programme. Whether I was to be fife or drum, piccolo or bassoon, yet remained to be discovered by me ; but it would be the part that none of the other performers had cared for, they having plainly monopolized the leading rôles of the score.

As I approached my tea-table it appeared that I was duetted with what seemed an able-bodied violoncello which had evidently been a good deal played upon at public entertainments. She was completely fitted out with a requisite set of screws—they were plainly visible in and about her head ; but she instantly conveyed the impression that some of the strings were

gone, had snapped. No sooner, however, had she with admirable technique drawn her bow, than it became clear that the strings which held good were accustomed to do duty likewise for those missing. Had but one string been left, she would have played that to the world with unabated vigour, and even greater skill, for the whole instrument. And that made her one of Life's master musicians: people who can do that are the master musicians of the world. The other members of the tea orchestra should have risen and lifted their cups to her.

From where I sat—at the uttermost extremity of Cape Horn—an up-ocean view of the other guests was to be had if any one cared to have it. My companion soon let me know that this was a farewell tea-party, the breaking up of the band of summer tourists and ocean travellers, who have such insatiable ways of holding on to each other after they land: they had chosen thus to drown their melancholy.

The sons of the house were absent; they had gone down in a tug, I learned, to meet the steamer, at quarantine; had shouted their greetings from the deck of the tug to the deck of

the steamer and then had hurried back up the bay and back to their college.

Next to the hostess on one side sat the mother and son, of whom early in this narrative fearful mention has been made : next to her, on the other side, sat the sister and the brother, also of previous fearful mention. I thanked Providence that at least they were *both* there, those rivals : it was proof that she had not yet decided between *them*. Halfway down the crescent on one side I saw the Paludal Aunt. Opposite on the other side of the crescent sat the Commodore, and with him—what troubled me—was the family physician. The two spoke earnestly together with eyes often turned toward the hostess. Yet still oftener the Commodore's glance—which would have made the Byronic reputation of a Corsair—wandered down to my companion ; whereupon, unfailingly, the violoncello rendered back for him a movement that could not be misunderstood, even by a spectator : it was a plain *capricioso*, a palpable *non troppo tardo*.

This, then, was the way she greeted me ! There was time and quiet for thinking it all

over that night. It was a beautiful party. They made up a scene of such irrepressible high spirits. They were permeated by the luxurious tranquillity of mind, the buoyancy of temperament, which is the last hall-mark of the well-born and the well-to-do. They radiated that versatility of New York people whose lives consist in changes from one set of pleasures to another set of pleasures, the sole regret and hardship being that they cannot enjoy both at once. It really was an orchestra. Their whole conversation was melodious and harmonious with refined little exclamations and outcries and reminiscences of the homeward voyage, of things seen in other lands. They seemed to illustrate a society given up to musical migrations.

I felt a little betrayed—misused. I had been drawn into a situation that I could not adorn, for I had never travelled. Somehow the experience left me with the comic feeling of a guest who might have been invited to a Spanish dinner because he had never been to Spain—who had been asked to dress as a *toreador*, because he had never seen a bull-fight.

Only when I was leaving did she speak with

me, and she was then claimed by those crowded about to sever the tourist ties. Quite without any special interest she asked :—

"Did you go home this summer?"

I said I had not gone home. With the same smiling inadvertence she asked :—

"Did you write the story?"

I said I was still writing it ; it had grown into a book.

That was the voluminousness of her conversation. But there was one other thing. Once I surprised her eyes searching me : with a look in them as though the tea-party did not exist, as though she sat there alone among them—thus I one swift instant surprised her, trying to read me.

What troubled me most was the presence of the family physician with a countenance sympathetic and serious, and the long talk with the father. The weight of it could not be thrown off. It pointed like a finger to another barely discoverable fact—that there *was* a change in her : as little as I saw of her, I saw that. Something grave had occurred. But I could ask no questions, I could do nothing.

The seating of my rivals on each side of herself and the placing of me at the greatest possible distance reaffirmed upon her return what she had declared on her departure—that the old tie between us had been snapped.

I did not go to the house again.

One forenoon as I worked there was a touch on my bell and a messenger delivered a note :—

"Was the tea so bad that afternoon? You did not drink yours. You tasted it twice and then were sure. It might be better another time. Could you come to-morrow and see? And if you are writing the story, why not bring it and read it to me? I wish you would do this, for I desire very much to hear it."

The hour of my reckoning with her had come at last!

The house was very quiet as I walked through the hall. I had been received at the door with the guarded air that the visitor was to be no one else. When I stepped out on the veranda, at one end of it she had already risen to greet me—alone.

She stood quite still, statuelike. The veranda might have been some beautifully draped salon

of sculpture and she the only figure in the salon. Still, statuelike, she stood. About her fell vestments of the softness and tint of woven ivory. There were bands of purest white. There were other bands of blue—the blue of summer dawn : at her belt were white violets. Her exquisite head with its banded gold had a little unconscious forward droop toward me —as of questioning welcome : and as if there rested on it also the weight of chastened nobleness. There *was* a change : a new dignity, a new gravity ; a little of the girlishness gone, more of the woman unfolded. She gave me her hand with no more self-consciousness than if she had placed in mine the hand of another woman. And she exclaimed with quiet, quick relief as her eyes rested on it :—

"You have brought the story. I am so glad!"

I replied dryly :—

"The opening of it. The opening will be enough."

We had our tea on another part of the veranda, conversing yet saying nothing : and then we returned to where she had been before.

A chair had been placed for her in that

corner, not the chair of an invalid, yet restful and as designed to give æsthetic peace to one who might need peace of every kind, and need it at once. A little bookstand with books scattered over stood beside it. For me a table had been brought suitable to a reader's convenience, and beside it stood a chair in which John Milton might have sat to dictate *Paradise Lost*; it suggested to me *my* lost one.

Both of our seats faced toward the open.

Ready to listen, she leaned forward in her chair and placed her elbows on her table; the face propped between the palms, the eyes turned from me toward the garden. It was the posture of a self-shielded listener who wishes to listen with her whole being.

Without prefatory word I began :—

A June morning long years ago—three-quarters of a century ago. A little town of rich proud people in a land of deep pasture. On the edge of it an old building of Gothic architecture with castle ivy on its brown walls; a lawn of flower-beds and forest trees. One of the romantic sentimental boarding-schools of the South for young ladies of that mid-

Victorian period in the United States. Old times, old manners, old customs, old actors and actresses of the human comedy, long since fallen back to dust.

The characters of the story: the three maiden sisters who were at the head of the Seminary; a young music teacher—the only man in the institution; a young farmer whose estate was several miles distant; a young Southern banker and planter from New Orleans; and the heroine—one of the graduates. A chapel scene with the heroine reading her essay; another scene under the trees of the lawn where the lovers meet: they love at sight.

I finished. I had read, not as one who reads a story, but a verdict, a vindication, his own acquittal. I laid the sheets aside and waited. If plainness had been needed, there was inevitable, inescapable plainness: now she knew that her wound had not been dealt by me: she had inflicted it herself. It was she who had brought on the storm that burst over her head; I had stayed under clear skies. She had conjured up the destructive hurricane; I had wended my way across a landscape of still fruit.

For a long time she did not stir. Then with her face still at rest on the palm of one hand she withdrew the other and extended it toward me sidewise :—

"I understand now. It is all only too plain."

Her voice took up life where it had been broken off between us, and she clasped my hand with long close strength. There in the hand, not on the lips, lay all her regret for the wound she had dealt me : for the injustice of which she was guilty. Both voice and hand sought to bring back unclouded happy days and to throw open again the gates of the future. Alas! the first unclouded days — they were gone! The happy gates, the first gates—they were closed and never now would we pass through them!

In an instant all that I had held against her —and this was nearly everything that a man can hold against a woman—was blotted out. Not a word was to be wasted on it, and gathering up the sheets of the story, I said to her as one who but too willingly begins everything once more :—

"Tell me about your summer."

She leaned back in her chair, seeking its restfulness; the strain of all this had left her trembling; almost her face was as a white violet. With her head at rest, and with her hands in her lap she said to me with a smile :—

"I have not had any summer."

She studied my face incredulously, for it must have worn a look of mystification :—

"Have you not heard? Did no one tell you? I am just getting well. There are little breakdowns and weaknesses all through me yet because my strength has not come back. And that is why they put this chair here for me. And that is why—" her smile was plaintive—"that is why I need it."

Her story must evidently be told before relief could come to her—as it had come to me. She placed herself at ease in her chair until she faced me, and then she began :—

"You have thought I had a happy summer. We went straight to Switzerland, and by the time we reached Switzerland I had developed typhoid fever. I was ill a long time—so ill that I came very nearly not being ill any more.

Another long time I was getting well enough to be moved. And then for another long time they were taking me from place to place; from the mountains where I fell ill to the seashore; from the seashore to the lakes; from the lakes back to the valleys; and then from the valleys up the mountains again,—with a nurse and physician, and with every one doing all that could be done."

She paused to give me a look—almost aggressive in its self-defence:—

"It was not what happened between us that brought on typhoid. After they had studied my case the physicians told my father that it was probably nature's settlement for my last year at college and first year in society. There was a great deal of hard work, that last year in college; there was a great deal besides that was not hard work. There was ambition, a struggle, to get honours. And from this year of overwork I passed at once into society. And then hard work of another kind began there—and more things that were not work, and ambition to win honours again. I suppose I never paused to consider that there could be an end of my

strength, and that nature is made of things that can only stand so much. The physicians thought this : that typhoid had marked me as a desirable subject for punishment—at least for a warning as to my future ; I suppose the moral is that if I am ever again a schoolgirl, I must not strive for honours ; and that if I am ever again a debutante, I must go to the wall and flourish against the wall."

The old faint gleams of humour were beginning to return :—

"But then you see : *after* I had typhoid what had taken place between us made the typhoid worse. Shock and worry made the typhoid worse ; and then the typhoid made the worry worse ; and so I had to contend with both ; and that is why I did not have any summer."

The current of her thought was seeking the easiest channel : it were better left to run as it would with no words from me set up as stones for it to dash against.

"It *was* a shock—what you said that morning. You may not know that a girl's school-days are sometimes the most beautiful, the most

sacred. My college life was that—the most beautiful part of my memory, the most sacred thing in my past. As it drifts away, it becomes dearer, a closed experience of my girlhood, a rounded-out shape of something that I once was. The shock was that you were going to destroy this—it was to be invaded, beclouded, ruined. And that brings me to the other shock. This I think you can understand. I believe all young people can understand it : it is the discovery that the older world is going to make use of us—of us girls and boys, us young people, if it can ; and it nearly always can. During my first year in society I had intimations that people there would use me if they could ; but you can protect yourself from such people if you have the courage to do it, and those things have made no impression. But that morning ! You stood for the world that would use me : by you I was to be offered to the public for sale—in trade. By *you* ! And the most beautiful part of my life—my girlhood—was to be at auction ! That was when the shock came to me which we who are young, I suppose, find to be our bitterest lesson of distrust. It is the old cup of anguish

to the young ; I know it was my first cup of anguish."

The deepest of all silence had fallen upon us and lasted. She had leaned forward once more and with her arms on the book-stand and her face buried in her palms :—

"I could not believe it of you ! I *could* not ! Yet I did not know what else to believe. The time was so short that morning ! And as you described the story you were going to write, it was all myself—*my* college, *my* commencement day—*my* essay—myself—and—you ! "

Her strength showed that it was taxed ; and yet new strength began to come and it brought new peace. I waited for her to go on and she asked for nothing but that I should wait :—

"That was one way I looked at it. Then another way opened up, and all through the typhoid I never could take my eyes from that. You came to me that morning, as you had said, with something beautiful flaming in you. There really was a light on your face—an unforgettable light. Then I saw that light go out. I put it out. I shall never forget the look in your eyes as you saw me extinguish it. It was as if

I had murdered in you something immortal just beginning to live. When I began to think of that—I got worse. If you really had come to me in the first great moment of your career, I had thrown myself across your path ; I had thwarted you, had tried to end at once your dream of greatness ; and I think I understood what a dream that was. Those were the two troubles all summer ; I was wretched and ill with the thought that you might go on with this work ; and I was wretched and ill with the thought that you might not go on with it. It was kind of choice between your destroying my happiness and my destroying your happiness. It was not easy—that decision."

Thus she shrived her soul of its error, not its sin ; and that power of pardon in nature which is so patient with our mistakes when these grow out of our ideals, that spirit of peace which never withholds its presence from our sincerity, must have descended upon her and granted its absolution.

She turned toward me :—

" Can I say anything more ? "

. . . . .

At the very end she brought out what must have been in her consciousness from the beginning, and had been held back for that very reason : it was the *crux* of the whole truth :—

"I suppose all the trouble came about because I am a woman and because a woman takes things to herself that are not meant for her. That must have caused a great deal of trouble in the world ! But a woman has to have *some* faults ! And that is among her useful ones. Have you thought of a woman's other peril, the fault just the reverse : not to take to herself the things that *are* meant for her ? Have you the least idea what other women think of such a woman, what they say of such a woman ? I wonder what you men think ? So between taking to herself the things that are *not* meant for her and not taking to herself the things that *are* meant for her, she has to walk a very—straight—and—narrow—road."

She leaned back and smiled resignedly at the hardships of her sex. For the first time the old gaiety, the old tide of humour overflowed. The black cloud which had hung so long over-

head began to break up and to show white edges with sunlight rushing through to the earth. She betrayed signs of fatigue, and I sought to dismiss the whole subject by making it ridiculous :—

"There must be a kind of woman who for her own peace of mind should never take a walk out of doors on a clear night : if she saw a shooting star, she would say it was being shot at her and that she knew who did the shooting."

She retorted in kind :—

"When a woman of that kind goes out with you, you should take the precaution to see that it is cloudy."

Then with grave sympathetic impulse she turned to me :—

"Tell me about *your* summer."

I answered summarily :—

"Oh, I have not had any summer. It was one morning early in June—now it is an afternoon in the middle of October : that has been my summer ! "

As I was about to take my leave, she gave a little outcry of humorous recollection :—

"Oh, wait ! Do not go ! I had nearly forgotten. There was something to tell you.

Did you know that you had the seat of honour at the tea-party the other afternoon ?"

That had not been my opinion, but I took refuge in conventions :—

"I had supposed all the seats were seats of honour."

"But did you realize who your companion was? And why you were not more formally introduced ? She is to be the new member of the family : the Commodore is going to be married."

I thought of the strings that still held good.

She now took up this little story and she blazed with the spirit of mischief :—

"That was another thing that resulted from the typhoid ! I became ill in a hotel, where she had just made our acquaintance. She was not allowed to nurse me, there were so many others. But make things for me she did. And while she showered attentions on me with one hand, she made nice things for the Commodore with the other. Sometimes the hands got crossed and the things that were meant for me went to him. That showed she really liked him—her sending him the things meant for me :

she made an exposure—a Southern exposure. I liked her for it—for the warm side. It meant that she really cared for him to the point of forgetting herself. Otherwise she would not have had him, for of course I could have prevented it all if I had wished. After I began to get well, she and I arranged it—that the Commodore must be married. We had no understanding between ourselves. Two of us women accomplish so much more when we work without one. An understanding makes us responsible, and we do not like to be responsible. So she and I have planned that there shall be *one* wedding in the family. It will be an alliance between the yacht and the —tug. Which will sail away with the other I do not know. It will depend upon the weather : each of them will have the better of it in its own weather."

We were walking through the hall toward the front door : she glanced from side to side :—

" And so these dear ancestral halls will soon not be mine any longer—to rule in them. I have ruled in them a long time. And now just when I am beginning to understand the

beauty of being a real tyrant in them, I abdicate the throne and become—a stepdaughter. What the tug will by and by do with *me*—that is a hazard of deep ocean!"

Just inside the door she threw all this pleasantry aside and said with soberness :—

"Now will you bring the rest of the story? I am intensely interested," and for an instant her eyes questioned mine : then the thick lashes veiled them. Thus she had released her hold on the past and grappled the future.

As I walked away I felt much as though I had been experiencing not in the realm of music, but in the reality of life a great Symphony of Beethoven—the Pastoral Symphony :—

A traveller has in his journey reached a region of country of such charm that he stops there. But hardly has he entered upon full enjoyment of its pleasures before a storm suddenly bursts over the landscape. You feel the darkness, the chill ; you dread the disturbance and the destruction ; you shudder most at peril of the bolt which strikes so blindly and so fatally. Then as suddenly as it came the storm has gone, the sun is out again, birds take up their songs,

the peasant's hymn of praise and thanksgiving is heard; and upon the black mass of the retreating thunder clouds is thrown the music of immortal safety.

Our quarrel had come as quickly: and now it had dissolved in rain and light—and in spiritual music above the dying storm. Still I could but recall a note of Beethoven's about his whole Symphony: that the spectator was left to solve the situation for himself! This was now the case as regarded my symphony!

There was much to ponder that night, chiefly the change in her, the growth of nature. This had showed itself in the filial sacrifice of her supremacy in the household that her father might enjoy a second, an autumnal, happiness. Her displacement as the social leader of the family pushed to a further stage her aloofness from its other members: this had always made her a slightly isolated figure in the domestic group. I wondered whether that power which had early taken the place of another parent to her were not partly responsible—the strong old house-mother herself—who stood alone among the other houses. Birthplaces lay upon their

children their traits—their littleness or their largeness, their weakness or their strength. It was certain that no other member of her family would ever be involved in *her* nuptials. She had planned her father's ; her father could never plan hers. The groom would wed all there was of her.

And it had not escaped me how disciplined for matrimony she had further been by brothers—those big, sturdy, ungovernable, hardy, riotous college lads. Had I not received of late a suggestive letter from a week-end friend, a dealer in rubber, who during his vacation had availed himself of its travels to journey on to wedlock. In the letter he had reviewed his conjugal disadvantages on this point.

"Dear Old Comrade of Many Talks about our Future—Be advised by one who has outstripped you on the road to his. When you marry, let it be a girl who has spent her life with brothers. Thus you may reap the harvest of that training which only brothers can bestow. In the family of my wife there were no sons, and all the difficulties which she should have battled through with the brothers who never

were, are being fought to a finish with the husband who is. They are not my fights; my fights are a husband's fights; and Heaven be my witness that there are as many of these as I can stand up to. So, friend, be warned, be wise; and be assured that the distinction between a woman who has been reared with brothers and the woman who has not is as the difference between manufactured rubber and crude gum. My wife as to her general knowledge of masculine nature is virgin gum. She is still in the Congo; and I fear there will be many an outcry about man's atrocities before I ever get her to Belgium."

Thus I dwelt on her perfections: but what did her perfections profit me—unless it were thus to dwell on them?

Now followed weeks when the world was without a shadow, the lute without a rift. The story entered upon better days; for her happiness passed into me, my happiness flowed into my work, and happy work is work with breath and wings. All because there was faith restored between us and an attachment now sending deeper roots down into our strength.

She had entered with delight upon the story itself and upon the study of an old Southern Female Seminary with its pupils of long ago. In gathering my materials I had gone to the attic to ransack musty trunks filled with letters and books and articles of dress of the period. Here I had found, yellowed, tattered, moth-eaten, my grandmother's music-book. The loose sheets almost fell open at a much-used place, and there I found a song: "I'd offer thee this hand of mine." Under it in my grandmother's handwriting was this memorial: My Graduating Song.

Much delight she had with this old music-book.

Meantime the story had begun to move toward its depths: the heroine began to be revealed. One day after a reading I received no praise. Turning to see why, I found her regarding me with the most curious expression. As nearly as it could be interpreted it expressed an amused toleration of what she had just heard —and of me: she had the air of having discovered what she had been expecting to discover; but that I was helpless in the matter, and that

it was something that she must endure: she was prepared to endure it, wished to endure it.

This disconcerted me, and I exclaimed: "What an expression! That is a *new* one!"

Whereupon the expression fled, and she laughed outright:—

"Is it? Am I expected to have no more new expressions? Do you mean that my face has already used up its permissible expressions?"

Thus with a jest she hid the truth, but did not remove it. I had been silent once before; this time I determined to speak at once:—

"What is the trouble *now*?"

Her face grew thoughtful:—

"Do not let it make any difference with the story. I beg you not to let it make any difference."

And there came back to her face the same look,—that the story had laid upon her a burden which she was resolved to bear—wished to bear.

"But tell me what the trouble is!" I cried.

"I will not talk about it," she replied, rising to terminate the interview.

This was intolerable to me. I went home at the end of my patience and sat down to study the meaning of the mystery. The first trouble I had understood at once ; she had done everything to make it understood. Here was trouble that she tried to conceal, and when unable to hide it, had refused to declare its nature.

But the idea that the story should cast a burden upon her was unendurable. I withdrew myself and my work. I stopped the readings, stopped going to the house. I could have wished that my apartment might have been some iron citadel with iron walls, iron doors, iron windows, iron floors, that nothing could escape from me and my work to her.

One day as I worked there was a touch on my bell : a servant stood at the door bringing something delicately. I received it, and closing the door, bore it to my writing-table. Lifting the napkin, I found a card :—

"Blanc-mange for the heroine."

I sat staring at the blanc-mange. It was as if Judith, instead of taking off the head of Holofernes for his misdeeds, had walked up to

him and mollified him with a saucer of sugar and starch.

I returned no acknowledgment. A few days later a tray arrived with a card :

"Calf's-foot jelly and lady-fingers—for the heroine, who is not very well now and begins to need delicacies. From one who knows the value of delicacies at the right moment."

I returned no acknowledgment.

Then the iron citadel began to be bombarded. Things appeared to come through the door, through the windows, through the floor. A basket of orchids seemed to arrive through the ceiling. One day a note entered :—

"Dear Sir — Pardon my addressing you, being a total stranger. But I am making a collection of autographs ; and being a great admirer of your work, I feel that my collection would be sadly incomplete without something from your pen. A stamped envelope with my address is enclosed. If with the autograph you could send a sentiment, it would be much appreciated. If you cannot give both the

autograph and a sentiment, a sentiment is preferred. Do oblige me with a sentiment."

I made no acknowledgment.

Some days later an envelope arrived containing a small sheet of paper, rose-hued and rose-scented. On it I found written two stanzas of my grandmother's graduation song :—

I'd offer thee this hand of mine,
If I could love thee less.
But hearts as warm and pure as thine
Should never know distress.
My fortune is too hard for thee,
'Twould chill thy dearest joy ;
I'd rather weep to see thee free,
Than win thee to destroy.

I leave thee in thy happiness,
As one too dear to love,
As one I think of but to bless,
As desolate I rove.
But O, when sorrow's cup I drink,
All bitter though it be,
How sweet 'twill be for me to think
It holds no drop for thee.

I made no acknowledgment : I thought I would absent me from felicity yet a while.

The bombardment continued. One day a note struck me on the breast :—

"Dear Sir—May I offer a suggestion? It might be of service. If at any time the heroine should need outdoor air, you might think of taking her to the Park; but there are so many heroines in the Park! I am writing to say that my father has a yard, that the yard has a ramble, and that the ramble leads to some seats. The seats are, one of iron and the other of marble. It is all very quiet and private, and you would be quite alone there with her. In the stillness of the autumn sunshine you could be very thoughtful, and she could be. I myself will see that you and she are not disturbed. I give you the word of one who is very much interested in her welfare and in your welfare and in the future of you both."

Then I could absent me from felicity no longer.

It was the middle of one afternoon of Indian summer. The sunlight fell faint and silvery. The air was so mild that one could sit out of doors in a yard with a book: drifting leaves of the book, leaves drifting from the trees.

An afternoon of stillness, the stillness of Indian summer. The dweller in the city knew that out in the country over fields and woods and water that stillness rested: that in the motionless air hung a faint haze as of vanished camp-fires, as the burning of many-coloured leaves in the mountains. Indian summer! Spirit of yearning for things to be, pain of the unattainable in things near, regret for things gone. In spring the beauty of the world was sharply defined and embodied; it had passed into the myriad forms of nature to inhabit them. Now all those forms have perished and before they perished they cast it out again, leaving it disembodied and a wanderer.

But all homeless things touch us. And this beauty of the world without an abode, this breath we breathe which is the essence of a thousand things that have passed away, this threat of the final goal of the universe which will know the finite no more, subdues us, chastens us, stirs within us our outcry against the brevity of our joy.

It is so old—this silence and stillness of the

atmosphere. As it approaches from all sides and encamps about the city, so once on the Campagna it beleaguered the walls of Rome; it beleaguered the walls of Troy before the Argives camped there; it beleaguered Babylon. All the noise of New York is less to it than the chirp of a grasshopper on a blade of brown grass. The noises soon die away; it lasts—that stillness and silence of the atmosphere on which all things perish and leave not a trace.

I turned into her street and stopped beside the hedge: it was turning sere; leaves rustled under my feet. But I buried my face in it once more as twice in spring when it was snow-white with bloom and fragrance. I murmured in an undertone:—

"How do you do?"

The reply came at length as from a reverie half broken:—

"I do not know how I do."

"You are not unhappy?"

"No, not unhappy."

"But you are not happy!"

"No, not happy."

"Not unhappy, not happy. Grey-blue like the day."

"Yes, grey-blue like the day."

Our words scarce reached one another; a spell weighed us down. We spoke as though we were side by side and yet too far from one another.

After a silence, her voice reached me like some echo of itself:—

"Did you know that you look like Indian summer?"

"Is it so bad?"

"Listen to this out of a story—an unwritten story: His hair was dark oak-leaf brown like autumn oak leaves after they have fallen and lie thick and crisp and curled. The Old Greeks often spoke of hyacinthine hair—hair that curls like hyacinths. His was hyacinthine. Sometimes there was a dry blue mist in it as of Indian summer. It was not peaceful, but turbulent, as on the heads of young Greek athletes when they came from contests in the games. On his hands and face—on his neck—faint brown woodland shadows lay. Sometimes the brown shadow on his face had such still depths.

Oh, such still depths! His moustache was oak-leaf brown, no blue haze in it but a tinge of oak-leaf red under the brown. His eyes were Indian-summer blue-grey; sometimes there was in them a look of such stillness and silence: then perhaps he was thinking of his own country. Did you ever read that description in any story?"

"No."

"*I* have read it in a story. Often I wonder how the story will end."

Her voice seemed to die away upon the air. Softly I called to her :—

"Tell me! Is there much Indian summer in your garden?"

"Not much. There is never much in any garden, is there? Only a little blue pool of the blue ocean."

"Does the Indian summer in your garden cause you to think of things that have disappeared there?"

"Sometimes."

"Then sometimes do you think how in spring many things in it acted as though the garden existed for them, belonged to them:

soil, air, sun, rain, dew, darkness,—all belonged to them ?"

"Why should I tell you ?"

"Now the garden is there and they are gone. They passed over the surface of it as a cloud passes over the sky. And that other flower—the flower of our spring—the flower of our youth. It too believes that earth and air and rain and dew and sun and darkness are for it. It is as brief as the others : by and by the garden is there ; youth is gone."

"Well ?"

"Why do you keep me waiting ?"

There was a long silence :—

"If I kept you waiting, it would be cruel, it would be foolish. It is unkind to ask me such a question. Suppose I should ask you a question : why do *you* keep *me* waiting ?"

"Then it comes back once more to the same thing—the book. You are waiting to know me better through the book : is that the truth ?"

"Would it not be wise ?"

"Then the book is to be the final test ?"

"It *will be* a test."

"Tell me this: how can it be a fair test, how can I do my best work on it, if it throws a shadow on you?"

"It does not throw a shadow on me: it sheds a light."

CHAPTER II

Winter in New York.

Low leaden cloud beyond which the eye cannot trace the disc of the sun. Whirling, twisting, rebounding winds that sting the cheek as freezing water bites the hand. The mud of the streets solidified as rock. Roofs, verandas, fences, door-steps ; the poles of the telegraph, the posts of gas light and of electric light—all ice-cased, snow-thatched. Along the city's great avenue by night palaces buried deep in warmth with frosted window-panes ; through curtains of damask and of lace dim moonlike radiance glimmers. Waiting chauffeurs with flapping arms buried deep in their furs like Esquimaux. The wide river alongside the city with rhythmic ebb and flow between the sweet tide of the mountains and the salt tide of the

sea now quieted under the rigour of the frost, each bank far out toward mid-stream covered with the fixed ermine and silver of the frost. In the narrow mid-channel the grinding and crushing of loosened blocks of ice by the careful ferry-boats as they barely force their way to the grey-bearded piers. Out on the ocean great mystical steamers coming into port as if bringing tidings from the Ice Age of the earth: their masts and decks spectral with the death of the North, their ice-plated prows tossing aside waters as white as breast feathers of Arctic swans. In the Park under a sky where the sharp-rimmed moon rides full and thick stars glisten in diamond ether, all nature snow-hung; nights as still, brilliant, dead, as those on Lapland wastes.

Winter in New York.

Bleaker, darker than the winter in the city was the winter within me. The book had begun to fail. It had opened well, it had gone incredibly well through the simpler stages. During those autumn days after her return, especially, it had moved as on a high predestined road to an inevitable goal. Then

without warning of its collapse it had begun to totter, to go to pieces, to fall. There was no failure, no dimming of the first vision of the work ; in imagination it was a masterpiece yet. My trouble was the difference between imagining a masterpiece and writing a masterpiece. The tragedy of youth and inexperience was within me still. When the action of the story called upon the scene the great powers of the mind, the great passions of the heart, it lay beyond me, I was no longer ruler over my work.

There were times when I put to myself the question : *Was* it youth ? *was* it inexperience? Or was I one of those who can imagine but not create ? Did I swell the vast, pitiful, ever-moving army of the young who all over the nation, from cities, villages, farms, when glowing visions of the imagination begin to rise within them, throw down their duties, quit their places, desert their people, and enter upon the pilgrimage to New York with faith that visions will there become achievements? In me as in them was it but youth's blind belief in itself, which mistakes the desire to sing for the gift of song, the desire to act for the art of the

stage, the desire to paint for the mastery of colour, the desire of sculpture for supremacy over line? And was it to be my bitter lot that I asked only to dedicate myself to the highest, but the highest would not have me, thrusting me back with the rebuke: you are numbered among the millions who must work for bread; who for all their work will never have bread enough?

Now with each reading it became plainer to us that the story would be no master-work: this was settled in advance of the end. She tried to conceal her disappointment — it was wellnigh overwhelming: I was lowered in her eyes fatally. But by one of those mysterious compensations with which Nature so often equalizes her own inequalities, as this hope went out in her, a sympathetic and protective tenderness came forth—perhaps woman's best, sublimest gift to a failing struggler. And there became manifest in her at the same time the practical, all but ungovernable, impulse to interpose, to seize hold and direct.

One dark December afternoon I read the worst yet. I finished without comment, she

had listened without comment. Finally, at sacrifice of herself and under stress, she spoke out with unsparing candour :—

"Why do you not let me make suggestions? Point out any mistakes I may possibly have seen? One who looks on so often has an advantage over one who is in action. Why will you not let me do this?"

With sternness toward myself, I answered :—

"Not one word will I hear! Not a suggestion must you make!"

She studied my face curiously : if there was no room for such thing as a masterpiece within me, to her there was space for magnificent folly. She laughed with humorous exasperation :—

"Do you expect to be able to see everything in the world that *I* see?"

"I expect to be able to see everything in my work that you see. It is my office to be able to discover every mistake in it that any one could discover. And that I will do! If I cannot, I am not fitted for my work."

She said good-bye at the door ; it was snowing heavily, and as I stood on the step she watched, as with a kind of whimsical enjoyment,

the flakes of snow as they fell on me. I do not know what enraged countenance I wore, but something brought out uttermost tenderness in her :—

"Will you come for a walk to-morrow afternoon? The paths through the Park ought to be cleared by then."

Never before had she invited me to walk.

I went to the Opera that night, and close under the golden roof of the Opera House I hung far over and watched Siegfried : watched his youth —his wild, untamed, singing, shouting, Mime-beating, bear-capturing, sword-forging, dragon-slaying, spear-shattering, fire-invading, maid-awakening youth. Most intensely I studied him when in the depths of the forest over his couch fell the forest music, dropping down upon him from waving boughs and young quivering leaves luted as by zephyrs. I watched him jerk his sword from its scabbard, and, striding to the pool, slash for himself a wild reed, and with the breath of youth undertake to give back to the forest its high inimitable melodies. Naught did he deem necessary but breath and reed and will — to reproduce those myriad-

linked harmonies of the winds. Again he slashed the reed and breathed on it; a third time he shortened it and blew again. Ever above him rolled the multitudinous billows of that weightless sea of ecstatic sound—the forest music: not a note of it on his pipe or within his power.

I, a youth, was vastly amused at him, another youth: what would he have thought of me had he watched me at my desk—with my breath, my reed, my will, trying to produce offhand the music of humanity. He made *me* ridiculous; and seeing myself ridiculous I felt encouraged.

The next afternoon I went for the walk. A heavy snow had fallen, no wind had followed, and it still lay on the trees as left by the clouds. It was my first snow-walk with her, and I could but marvel once more how she always triumphed over Nature. Out in the depths of winter she seemed a figure of such unassailable safety. The exuberance of health rebounded in her against everything rigorous without — waiting there ready and impatient for happiness. The long sweeping ostrich plumes above her exquisite head were the blue messengers of bright skies.

Richest dark sealskin enveloped her from throat to feet, and from under it there came out upon the winter air the faint odour of some most delicate flower. The mere playfulness of her feet in walking was a language—the warm white feet in a kind of onward dance just above the snow.

We had walked, and then we were returning slowly in the twilight. It was the hour of the great Nocturne of the City.

Before us, as we threaded our way along the winding snow paths, stretched the evening landscape—south and west: the white earth now in half shadow, the leafless trees snow-laden, the darker evergreens bearing the heavier burdens of their kind. Through these a yellow gleam flashed here and there as the lamps were lighted. Along the edge of the Park towered the great black buildings beginning to be fretted with long vertical and horizontal lines of lights; and infinitely behind in the background the far-spread crimson of the sky. We stopped to enjoy the scene; there it all was before us in one picture: Nature — Man — Dusk — Eternity.

As we reached the low brow of one hill there advanced toward us a little pageant of humility —the procession of Park donkeys on their way to their stables, to their feed and their sleep. No doubt glad enough to be on their way thither, rough-coated, shaggy-legged, undersized cavalry of the thoughtless. All day their backs had been as so many top fence-rails for gleeful children to straddle and bounce up and down on : the monotone of their lives an incessant downhill and uphill, with ever-changing burdens, but with no change of burden.

We stood aside in the narrow path to let the half-drowsy procession pass, and she stretched out her hand to stroke each beast ; but when the one who brought up in the rear, the meekest and forlornest and most imposed upon of them all, was tripping by, she suddenly caught him round the neck and drew his head against her heart and held him until with one hand she had pulled from under her cloak her flower and fastened it in his bridle under one long wintry ear. Emotion in her must overflow, and it overflowed on the donkey.

Well I knew who the real donkey in the case was.

As for the four-legged image of myself there in the snow path, while this was going on, he threw one ear forward toward the stable—for disappointment; and one ear rearward to his back—for submission: experience had taught him that whenever people were nice to him, they meant to use him; and as an asinine psychologist he made out that she now meant to get up and was but decorating him that he might look the finer while she rode.

We finished our walk in silence.

After dinner late I was walking up the Avenue on the way home. The thoroughfare was brilliant that night: the sky clear, the moon out, snow on the street, with lights from lamp-post and doorways and hotel entrances and shop windows. It was possible to see what was going on and that was why something arrested my attention at one of the hotels ahead of me. A white marble balustrade ran in front of it, and on this at intervals stood tubs in each of which grew a dwarfed evergreen. Each of the little trees was well snowed under. A

woman had paused with her face turned upward toward the balustrade and a tiny evergreen. As I approached she put up one hand and patted it as though it were a human head. Her face glowed with splendid health and happiness. She wore a hood and a long dark cloak, rather coarse but comfortable ; and as she threw it back from one shoulder to stretch out her arm, I noticed under it the garb of a trained nurse. In the city of millions that winter night, she perhaps out on the street for short relief from hospital and sick, with warm fresh young blood coursing through her —she there before the little frozen evergreen with her womanly impulse to nurse, to caress. Did it bring up memories, tell a story ? Or in her, was it absence of memories, a void in her heart ?

As the pastel of the day I wrote the scene down that night: I dedicated the little story of the unknown woman who caressed the frozen pine to the unknown woman who caressed the half-frozen donkey.

And that night a further question rose within me. Here once more I had come upon that

strange dependence of the human heart upon some image that is not human ; there was my threadbare scholar that summer day, tossing his white flower toward the face of Shakespeare ; there down by the Washington Arch was my Savoyard host, cultivating about his dinner-tables artificial grape-vines in memory of the shores of Lake Leman ; here was a woman on a winter night with thousands around her reaching out to the frozen tree. All one and the same thing—the human heart trying to reach other human hearts through images not human.

Now the question forced my mind further on : do we in turn use the human as an image through which we must try to reach things above humanity ?

What is any man's friend but an image to him through which he reaches things more to him than his friend is—that were before his friend was, and that will be after his friend is gone ? What is a man's love for a woman but of an image through which he holds steadfast and true to what is more to him than she herself ? If my friend fail in strength, in loyalty,

in honour, do I love strength and loyalty and honour less because his image has crumbled and holds them no more? If the woman loved prove faithless or too faulty, does not the lover turn toward another woman not thus marred?

And this was the reason why she must wait until she could be sure that in me she would find an image through which her nature might be released in its flight toward more than I could ever be?

The year now drew near its close, and my book of the little pageants of the streets drew near its end also. On the night of the thirtieth of December I finished it. I gathered them together into a bundle of the days and sat down and wrote to her :—

"The Old Year goes out to-morrow. To-night I bring to a close a work which was begun when it came in. The plan was that every day as I walked in this City of all life I should watch what was done before my eyes. At night I was to run over the scenes which stayed in memory as worthiest to be remembered and out of these to choose one—the best.

"This plan has been carried out. Not with-

out effort. The days of the year have not all been spent at ease. Some have been troubled, some burdened, some have drawn my eyes from the deeds of others to the needs of myself. The nights have not always descended softly under their tranquil lights. Some have had shadows deeper than the shadow of the earth ; some have known storms that raged beyond the tempest of the air. But through trouble and burden, through shadow and through storm, I have held on to my appointed course : that each day I should look out upon the world about me for something actual and beautiful, and each night write this down and carry the strength of it into my sleep.

"The work is done. I send it to you, it was meant for you. As I from the end look back to the start, I see how all the paths of the days have run into the one road of the year. The paths met in the road ; the road leads to you, ends in you.

"It is my way of telling you that you have been part of everything that I have found best in the world. Not one of these stories but I have claimed for you. I have observed no

actor in any scene without displacing him and saying that you would thus have acted.

"It may be that I shall never accomplish anything great; and being found out to be a commonplace person, I shall soon now be reminded to withdraw and leave you to look for greater things in some other man. If it must be, it will be. And I shall think you were right: that being what you are, you could not ask less of the man you are to love than that he do more in the world than I have thus far proved myself able to do.

"Even with the loss of you I shall take with me one thing that I can never lose: the memory of what you were.

"You will see that for one day of the year there is no story. Something is left out. That lack you will have to fill with your fancy; you may sit and wonder what little lost perfection of the City was not found to tell you in one more way what I feel. To-morrow that little perfection will be born—doomed to wander forever lost because there was no one to guide it to your door."

The next day I waited for some word; I did

not even leave my rooms, lest a message might come in the meantime. Often standing at my windows I looked out on the City—the far-spread vista of roofs : snow slowly drifted down, they were all white, so that the landscape of them suggested a frozen sea with ridges and pinnacles, vast crumpled fields of ice piled in heaps. The day ended, twilight darkened over the vast scene, the lamps of New Year's Eve began to glimmer. Still not a word from her.

Toward eleven o'clock there was a touch on my bell ; a messenger boy, his cap and the edges of his hair snow-sprinkled, his cheeks ruddy, his eyes dancing with the merriment of the night, handed me a letter :—

" When the parcel arrived last night, we had guests. Not until they were gone, not until the rest of the house was quiet, not even until the others were far away in dreams or dreamlessness would I dare begin to read. All to-day I was needed for things that no one else could do. But early to-night I had myself excused to the outside world, I made my excuses to those at home ; I have been reading ever since and

have just read to the end, and I am writing at once and I do not know what to say.

"This I do say first: that having written this book, you need have no doubt of your future. To me henceforth your faith in yourself is warranted, more than justified; you will live your dream, you will do great things, you will go far up the heights. And if, as I write these words, my tears blot them, they are tears of joy, a woman's joy in the triumph of a man for whom she has planned leadership, rank in his work. Here in *this* book is the proof of a thing you have hoped to achieve in the *other* book; here is the touch upon life, the handling of life, the ideals of life, that face toward immortality.

"You tell me that you wrote this book for me. I am unworthy of it; no one could be worthy of it; it is a vision of things that are perfect; it is the earthly flame of each day's deathless sun. It is not for me. I am not perfect, my imperfections are very many and very real. You must long since have found out that I am exacting, possibly you have thought that in some things I am without

mercy and without pity. Let me only hope that if I am exacting, I never exact of any one that he be mean, that he be petty, that he be inferior, that he be weak, that he be false. If I were disappointed by any one in these requirements, I suppose I should never forgive. If a man should awaken in me a great love in him, so that through him my spirit could pass outward to life's greater things—if he could not afterwards meet this need in me, I think I should be heart-broken.

"No ; this book is not drawn from what I am, but from what you are. It throws no light upon my nature, but upon yours. I know you now as I have never known you and could never have known you in any other way. By means of these little stories of every day of the year I have gone back and followed your road through it. I have tracked the footsteps of your thought. I have followed you every night into your dreams. And often I have recalled with each story what I on that day was doing. Particularly I have hunted out the story you set down the day I sailed. I have gone through most carefully all those written during the summer

while I was ill in Europe. And thus I have lived over your life throughout the year: I know how my path ran through it; I now know how your path ran alongside mine; and how every day from your path you threw something over into my path.

"But though this book is not for me, it is the call of a great silver trumpet to me from the heights. Your faith in me turns my face upward. It must be true that love sees best, truest, most; it is not blind. And if your love of me has seen these things in me, I can but hope that not all is a mistake. You may smile; but if hereafter you should ever come to believe that any one of these things was not true of me, I fear I should think that you had grown unjust.

"Thus your offering makes me new to myself. I see the city in which I have lived all my life as never before: the streets are new streets, the pageants are new pageants, my eyes are opened to what is going on around me. Never hereafter shall I walk in it without trying to find stories. A new year, a new city, a new life, a new book of life.

"Once I told you that you gave me the

greatest shock of my experience—that the world would use me if it could. That is the shock of girlhood. And that was less than a year ago. But changes have taken place in me very rapidly: and now I am already enough a woman to understand the great shock to a woman—that the world will not have her. The tragedy to a woman—that the world, looking for all that it may use, looks at her and looks away. I begin to feel something of that tragedy—that possibly I may live unused. If I can ever be a help to you in your work, may I? Do not tell the woman who cares for you that she can be of no service.

"And one thing I ask—even beyond the book you have sent me. Perfect as I think it, I yet leave it to go in search of the imperfect one which you fear will be a failure. From what is safe my heart goes out to what is in peril. My faith in you now is such that I expect you to do more than succeed; you will wrest victory out of failure, and that is the noblest success a man can win. Now more impatiently than ever I shall watch for the end of the other book."

I stood at my windows looking out on the crumpled sea of white roofs. Far southward through the snow-misty air I saw the pale gold of the great clock dial : the hands were pointing toward twelve. And now all around the horizon, from East River and North River, from the shores beyond, from the Bay, from every point within the city, faint and far and softened by the snow came the melodies of chimes and of horns—the music of the New Year Morn. Voices of all nations blent in one greeting to the city. All the tongues of men in one tongue of humanity

I a new creature with them—made new by her ! Her voice was the first that reached me from the human race with faith in what I could do. And with her faith now won for my work, closer about me I felt the approach of her love.

CHAPTER III

WINTER, rough-booted, grey-haired, grey-cloaked, and snarlish Shepherd, had gone northward beating sullenly down before him his bars of icicles and driving onward his disorderly flock of dark-fleeced clouds. Spring, barefoot amid young grass, and young dews, had tripped by, trailing her fingers across sad boughs and bringing forth from them the quick merriment of blossoms. And now Summer of the sweet breath and the sweet breast and quiet sandals had come to revisit her matured and gorgeous realm.

June, the fateful month to me, had already sent one of its bright weeks away into the past; and on a fateful night of the second week I was to write to the end of the story and terminate

the uncertainties of its young pair of lovers. And the end also would bring to a conclusion, either tragical or happy, the misgivings of its author toward her who, for some mysterious reason known only to herself, had decreed that upon the finished work she would base her decision to wed or not to wed him. There had long been a tacit understanding between us now that when I read her the final pages, she was to make known her acceptance or her rejection of me. And whether at the last moment she would be prepared to do this, my own will was fixed. I meant to say to her :—

"You have all along declared that this story would somehow furnish you with the key to my character. Has it done so? Whether or not this be true, I have waited long and I will wait no longer."

I could have wished that the end of the story were otherwise. Books without intention judge their readers; they are for them or against them; they uphold them or condemn them. And this story at its finish would almost have the force and directness of an arraignment of her for her treatment of me, an assault upon

certain traits of her character which she regarded as the bulwarks of her safety. The heroine of the book at the very end revealed herself as all that she, Muriel Dunstan, was not. When love came to her in her girlhood, she welcomed it as something she must not question ; to her nature if love could not be trusted, nothing could be trusted ; and in simple faith she had quickly yielded herself without a plan for the future or doubt of him she loved. Thus when I came to read the final chapter, it would be invested with the brutality of an indictment.

Now, if love be anything that can be named, it is gentleness. Almost it is enough for any one to say to any one else : "I love you because I believe that your love will always make you gentle with me." And I know that my whole nature toward her was one worship of gentleness. Yet I was thus forced by my work into a position of antagonism, most ill-timed, most unfortunate, perhaps most disastrous. It would almost be requiring too much of her that she should not be wounded at such a moment—that I should ask from her the confession of her love of me at the very

instant in which I was stamping my disapproval upon the elements of her being. And thus at the end of the book came the greatest battle of all its many battles. Surely the work ought to have been of life since it had been as turbulent as reality itself. With a kind of grim humour as I looked back over its progress, I marvelled that so many different kinds of trouble could arise from the same thing.

It is right that we should wring from our purses the uttermost farthing for life's greatest occasions. A thousand inconsiderable hours are but the servants of the few masterful ones which give to a career and character its whole higher meaning. Perhaps with this in mind I had ordered for myself that evening a most rich and lavish dinner; when placed before me, it was pushed away uneaten. Coming home, I had thought to find solace through another sense and had drawn upon some very rare and fragrant tobacco. Filling my pipe, I took my seat for the usual quiet hour before beginning work. And by this time you must be well aware that the seat in question was at my windows opening toward the west and south,

with the vast scene of the city below and the vaster scene of the twilight sky arched above. But whether the Evening Star and the New Moon were together in the clear welkin or were shut away from mortal ken by cloud I do not know. Nor how long I sat there do I know. When consciousness of time and place and circumstance returned to me, my rooms were in darkness and my pipe cold in my hand. It may have gone out quickly ; it may never have been lighted.

I got up, and groping my way to my writing-desk, lighted my lamp. And for a while I sat there with a certain overwhelming realization of the mystery and power of the uttered word. There before me were a few drops of ink and a pen point and a sheet of white paper, and with a few movements of the fingers one—some of the earth's great ones—could trace backward and forward a few simple markings that would bow many a head in tears, send laughter into a million hearts, and in a moment's writing leave his name writ for ages. That was not for me ; but what was for me was the certainty that my words would go straight to one heart

and there be poisoned arrows or the wings of faith.

How serene and clear the lamplight fell on my paper! I glanced up at the little statue of bronze. To my imagination her whole figure seemed conscious of the battle about to begin; it quivered with eagerness; all the features were tense with excitement; but the smile could not conceal lines of anxiety; under the eyes were shadows of solicitude.

My mind ranged backward to old ages when on the eve of great events images took part; statues gave a sign; marble dripped with the sweat of agony; bronze oozed with the blood of suffering; on some altar the figure of a saint beckoned or waved off; at some shrine the eyes of a divinity were seen to move to the right or to the left.

I asked for no miracle in my realistic lodgings. Always I had felt that were I a taker of snuff, I should take snuff to make me honestly sneeze, and not snuff that would lead me to wink even at miracles. On the eve of my battle my statue gave no sign that was superhuman. Only the signs that were human.

And I asked of it nothing more heavenly than innocence, more angelic than trust, more immortal than constancy.

I set to work. It must have been toward midnight that I was impelled to lay down my pen and look at my own hand in wonderment that it could write words so brutal—so brutally true. I got up and walked the floor. Could not the end be softened, be changed? Must I go to her on a mission of life's concord, bearing a missile of life's war? How could it be that a mere creature of my own imagination —a girl in a book—should have such authority that I myself had no right to change her? Must a mere fancy mar life's greatest plan? Long I walked the floor; then coming back to my work I wrote it down as it had to be, as a mason hews his block to the straight line, as the stonecutter drives his chisel into granite.

It was done. I leaned back in my chair. The hour must have been long past midnight. I suddenly became aware that the light around me and before me was gradually dying out. I looked up at the little figure of bronze. Her lamp was empty; the last drops of oil in the

bowl had already passed into the wick and were being drawn toward the flame. Lower and lower sank the final radiance. I bent quickly forward and fixed my eyes on the shadowy features of that patient keeper of my light. The marks of the struggle through which she had passed told on her; she looked weary; she asked to be released. In the words of Renan when his own end drew near she seemed to say :—

"I have earned my rest."

"Then you shall rest!" I murmured within myself. "Never again shall your light be kindled for any other labour."

The bluish ghost of flame on the wick went out, leaving the room in darkness. Groping my way to my bedside, I lighted my candle, and returning with it to the desk, set it on one side near the darkened statuette. Then I went to a drawer and took out the white scarf she had left with me that morning of farewell. Shaking this softly out, I returned with it and seated myself at the desk, with my eyes on the bronze :—

"Spirit of my Lamp, your vigils are over!

Guest of constancy and sweetness, of grace and light, you did your part! And now, protectress of my thoughts, nymph of the heart's clear run, warrior maid of the spirit's battle, steady beacon beside imagination's uncharted sea, narcissus flower that never drooped for drought, farewell! If the elements of which thou art wrought allow thee any share in the balm of sleep, then sleep thou thus, wrapt in the snows of purity."

I lifted the statue from her pedestal and began softly to wind the scarf about her. I began at the feet and wound upward around the waist, up to the shoulders, about the neck, across the lips until only the eyes were visible Bending over and looking into these, I said :—

"Farewell!"

I drew the mists of oblivion across her eyes and wove the frost of forgetfulness about her head till she was seen no more.

I awoke next morning as the east was beginning to flush rose colour with the dawn, and as the light streamed into my room I remembered how upon such a morning about a year before I had awakened with my first

thought of the story; how I had hurried across the city to announce it to her. Now on the afternoon of this day I was to go to her and read the end.

It was another masterpiece of a day—nature is prodigal of masterworks. Out on the ocean blue waves were dancing; inland from the ocean ran the clean Hudson toward its mountains, capped with blue waves. That day steamers would be leaving for Europe, yachts would spread their snowy sail on the river.

June!—the month of the colleges, the month of the nation's youth! all over the land between its two oceans, from palmetto to pine, the colleges were making ready for their closing exercises. Wherever in city or town or in rural seclusion there was one, eager preparations were going forward for Commencement Day—that day when the army of the young would be turned out into the vaster army of the old, to mingle with them, to work with them, to fight against them; to find out each other, to combine to make a new world, a new nation. And from thousands and thousands and thou-

sands of homes all over the Republic how many thoughts turned toward these colleges! with what hopes, prayers, solicitudes, prides! All the future would on that day centre about one figure—the vestal of the college. Somehow the destinies of the land, its strength, its might, its power, announced themselves as dependent upon her with all her frailty: what she was, the nation was; what she would be, the nation would be. Unless she were high, it would never be high; it could never rise beyond her elevation.

It was the Nation's Month of the Vestal and the Rose.

All day I remained in my rooms, touching and retouching the last pages. As the day waned I left my apartments, descended to the street, and started across the city. As I moved among thousands, an ordinary unnoticeable passer, giving no sign of the tragedy within me, I could but think that brushing against my shoulder perhaps were others as ordinary, as unnoticeable, who as successfully hid their tragedies. From beside me another youth's story may have started on a journey that led

him to blue-based, purple-aired Capri ; another's may have journeyed to the Cedars of Lebanon ; another's may have found its perfume in the Desert of Arabia.

The sun was low when I reached the house. The house was very quiet. I was received with the air that no one else was to be admitted. I went through the hall to the veranda, and stepping out saw her across the garden. The yard was already in half shadow. As if instinctively, she had taken refuge in that nook of the wall where the marble seat was and the ivy and the rose bush now in full bloom. There it was that I had announced to her tidings from my masterwork ; it was no masterwork now.

As I walked toward her, she rose and awaited me with I know not what marvellous blending of her girlhood and her womanliness. Both were speaking in her eyes, both were speaking to me, both said :—

"Be gentle with me!"

But we greeted each other, I think, without a word. Of that I am not positive. I do not know what took place, what we said, how we

acted. I do remember that before I began to read some effort was made to warn her :—

"There are things here you will not like. They will hurt you, they may offend you. I am sorry they had to be thus."

She bent her head in acquiescence as though she already knew what to expect.

No sooner had I begun to read than I grew calm. Trepidation is for life's lesser things. Facing the inevitable, the final, it is easy to be calm. But I think this very quietness in me increased her emotion. There was little outward sign. The stillness of the marble was scarcely more absolute than hers. Emotion expressed itself only in her hands, the dumb tragedy of the hands.

I finished. She sat in silence, I waited in silence. Then I turned to her :—

"That is the end of it all. And now I have waited long. I will wait no longer. You must decide."

She did not reply, and I turned from her. Her light touch was on my arm. With a long, quivering breath she bent away from me toward the rose bush and began to search it over, look-

ing among its blossoms for one that responded to her mood and meaning. Her eyes at last found one, and with a sign in them to me she drew my attention to it ; it was half opened, flawless. At sunrise it had been a bud, to-morrow it would be a full rose. With her whole attention turned to it she said :—

" Break it ! "

Thinking that she wished to avoid the thorns, I got up and broke it off, and returning to my seat, handed it to her. With her eyes fixed on it she shook her head, declining to receive it :—

" Tear it to pieces ! "

I looked at her, at a loss to understand a request so idle, whimsical, grotesque. It was too small a thing for me to do. She repeated her words with sad intensity :—

" Tear it to pieces ! "

I now discovered that there was that in her mood and meaning which was grave and sacred to her ; and awkwardly, unwillingly I acted the part she imposed upon me ; the petals lay strewn on the ground before us. She leaned over and looked down at them with that same

expression of mystical sincerity which often came to her face:—

"Grind them back into the dust!"

I would not. She repeated her words almost as a prayer:—

"Crush them back into the earth!"

I did so. I had come to realize that her nature at that moment had need to face life's possible cruelty, swift pathos, irretrievable ruin.

For a while she looked down upon the ruin. Then as if withdrawing herself from such a scene, as if the symbol had sufficed, and she could now turn from it to safety, she said in a voice that seemed to put an end to a long uncertain story:—

"Put your hands together."

I placed palm against palm.

She pressed together her own palms and laid them between mine—surrendered. And the whole stem of her delicate life now too storm-shaken to stand alone, her head sank lower until it touched my shoulder—there to rest: there her eyes were hidden.

"*Muriel!*"

"*Donald!*"

A low, long-famished cry to her and locked embraced.

But what to her signified the destruction of the rose has always been her secret. Many mysteries in herself I have never sought to probe. Sometimes I thought that it was her comment on the fate of the heroine of the story ; that she, too trustful, had been broken from the parent stem, torn to pieces by life's violence and scattered by storm. Sometimes it has rather seemed that she was thinking not of the heroine of the story, but of girlhood itself—girlhood that is radiant for its brief day and ends with marriage. The sun goes down, and it surrenders itself to love as the only guide, to enter darkness with it in search of happiness and in hope of a morning light.

This, then, is a plodding narrative of how an imagined masterwork by a youth turned out to be no masterwork at all, and how its author passed from a state of grace to a state of graciousness.

The book was brought out that autumn under the title of *In Years Gone By*. More appropriately the title might have been *In Ears Gone By*; for while it came into existence, the main fact in the life of its author was the possession of a pair of terrified ears: terrified by what she said and much more terrified by what she refused to say; so that when finally he ceased to hear the one and began to hear the other, it was as though his own ears also were by-gone and a new set of auriculars had emerged to equip his domelike and much-relieved laboratory.

However this may be, the book was brought out, and the publishers, by the practice of those black arts of which they are such masters, persuaded the world to try me again, and the world having tried me again, decided that while the story was not just what it wanted, neither was it just what it did not want. But already it had become a hope of mine some day to write a book which, by day while not reading it, would so bedevil a man with the delusion that it was interesting, and by night when he was reading it so deaden him with the certainty

of its being dull, that it would thus serve two useful ends: to hurry its reader into slumber when he should be asleep and help him to stay awake when he must keep his eyes open. I seemed to have succeeded sooner than I had hoped. But however that may be again, out of a widespread uncertainty of mind in the reading public I reaped my harvest from a field where all those who bought were wheat and all those who did not buy were tares: and how I did lament the tares! They were so needlessly numerous.

And thus to the amazement of both my publisher and myself each of us did well in point of avarice, though I still think the world did better in the matter of generosity. And all this was so astounding to my friends likewise that they could scarcely credit their own congratulations; whereupon one midwinter night, when there was snow on all roofs, my ugly mugs and dishes came down from the shelf with a clatter and a rattle; and a Welsh rabbit party was uproariously given by way of demonstration that the host was himself no literary rabbit. But my friends are like

every other man's friends: if you succeed, they come and declare that it was what they always foresaw; and if you fail, they go to one another and whisper that it was what they long expected.

The first week in January, one day an office boy appeared at my door—actually!—with the publisher's note of felicitation, and with his cheque which ran toward many thousands and really ran past a few of them. When the boy was gone and the cheque had been judiciously scrutinized, forthwith I got out my gold-plated card receiver and with great pompous show of being both myself and my own butler, I bore it toward the author seated at his desk as though it were a peacock roasted in its feathers of blue and green and gold: blue for the heaven and green for the earth and gold for treasure. Then I clapped on my hat and hurried down town and thrust the cheque under the grating of that little wicket where the paying teller, my old financial foe, stood cynical and adverse. He received it with his prearranged scorn and scanned it with contumely; but then glanced up and bade me a civil, commercial good morning—the

only morning as respects me that had ever seemed good to him.

I returned to my apartment, and summoning the superintendent, I leased one of the large marriageable apartments at the front of the building ; and thus by a process of both contracting and expanding, I passed from the house of commons to the house of lords.

In June we were married.

For the wedding journey she said she would like to go to my country, and thither we went and saw it when it is loveliest. She insisted upon seeing the place where I was born, where I had been "a little fellow" ; and she must be driven to a certain spot where once had been a fence and blackberry bushes. It was all changed now : no fence, no bushes, no little fellow, only the same sunlight. No inducements availed with her to be driven to that great lawn and forest where the other "little fellow" lived still—though not there now and actually at that time in Europe on her own wedding journey. "I do not wish to see it," she said, "not her nor anything that is hers." As we started northward again and had reached the boundary,

she looked from the car window a long time at the disappearing landscape :—

"Never again ! I wish it to be always on the dim border of my thoughts. After all, you did come out of my land of dreams."

In the autumn she came to live with me in the married apartment, and I turned over to her my family plate, whereat she greatly marvelled.

And soon thereafter I set about the writing —of my first masterpiece ! With her as my counsellor I place no bounds to what that work may become. If I did well without her and despite her, surely with her aid I shall work some of those wonders which sometimes strangely emanate from authors who have wives. So that she seems likely to be one of the most celebrated of uncelebrated women—the spouse of a genius : if Nature had only made him one.

Our lives were united, aside from literary masterpieces, as compactly as half a splendid red winter apple is joined to the other half of the apple.

And now before the Shears of Silence clip the

threads which have woven this piece of life's tapestry and are near the margin of the canvas, let the shuttle be cast to and fro a little longer to depict one final scene—that the last radiance of the whole picture may be left to rest on her.

One cool twilight of last summer we walked out on the veranda and down into the yard. The heir of the house—and heir of my royalties—was already out there in the twilight. His nurse occupied the marble seat—nurses sooner or later always get the best seats out of doors,—and she was slowly pushing to and fro the small white silken barge on which the heir slept; he being still at the head-waters of the River of Time. I feel some hesitancy in thus referring to him as heir to my royalties, for the reason that the servants of that narrow-minded, bigoted household uniformly speak of him and rejoice in him as the Commodore's grandson. To them I am that strange being they call The Writer; and as to what this may comprise they are most uncertain, the butler once on the eve of an election having asked me whether I had a vote. As for my paternal activities I am to them merely the negligible means in the hands

of Providence by which the progeny of the Commodore are to be made to appear on the earth and celebrate the existence of their grandfather.

As we drew near, the nurse yielded the nook to us and started across the yard, the little white silken barge beginning to flutter softly like some enormous moth. We halted it and stood one on each side. I do not know what was in his mother's mind, what his father was thinking how perilously near he several times had come to never being born ; how a word more than once had nearly pushed him back from the created universe ; how one of his mother's zephyrlike sighs or one of his father's groans audible in any adjoining apartment was wellnigh a veto on his existence.

How many after a few years of marriage still cherish against each other some grievance which belonged to the quarrels of their courtship, who secretly revolve some mystery in the character of each other which later acquaintanceship has not cleared away. In too many cases possibly such grievances, such mysteries, create their later tragedies. Certainly it must

be true that such grievances dislike to come out, but, then, they dislike to stay in ; and so there is irritation because they cannot do both and are of a mind to do neither : until some unexpected moment arrives and then—the exposure, the explosion.

We sat awhile in silence : I smoked, she did nothing—that last test of the perfect happiness of two people with one another. Young wife, young mother, maturing woman, she sat there enthroned in peace, draped in the security of her life. And once as I glanced at her, I craved for myself that absolute rest of mind also : and then all at once an old grievance rolled out :—

"What *was* the mystery about the book? You said repeatedly that it would be a test; that when it was finished, you would know me better. How *was* it a test? How through it did you know me better?"

A smile such as I had never seen came out upon her face. It was as though something long awaited had arrived at last :—

"You have kept that to yourself a long time. How can a woman answer a question that has

never been asked? If you had inquired sooner, you might have understood sooner. And then how can one force the attention of a man upon himself; and all this will compel you to employ your thoughts upon yourself."

While I waited for her to begin her story I could but notice with how deep a pleasure it was going to be told; whenever anything filled her with pleasure she seemed to glow as though lighted from within—a lamp of alabaster translucent with white spiritual flame:—

"One morning you came to me and told me a wonderful story of your first masterwork. The subject offended me. As far as you could foresee, if you wrote it I would give you up. Virtually I told you at once to choose between me and the story. You stood by the story. If you had given up the story for me, I might have been gratified at the moment, but afterwards I would never have had anything more to do with you. A man's work—not work that is forced on him, but the work that he deliberately chooses to do—must be first with him because his chosen work is his character. A man's love of a woman is not his character.

Love of women comes to men of all characters; but a man's ideal work is himself, and if a man be false to that, then he can be false to anything. Falseness is falseness; if you are false at all, you may be false all through. *That* was the test at the outset. If you had sacrificed your work for me, then afterwards you might have sacrificed me for something else. If you had sacrificed your work, you would have sacrificed yourself; and if you could sacrifice yourself, then I did not want you. You let me go and stood to your work, stood true to yourself; and though it hurt me at the time more than you can ever know, this was the turning-point: from that moment you drew me to you."

She was telling her story quite as though I were not listening, quite as though she were going over in memory her own past:—

"Later, another trouble came up about the book. This time it was something that I kept to myself: I did not wish you to understand the nature of it; I had my reason and the reason seemed to me absolutely good. I would not explain. This offended you and you sought to withdraw yourself and your work. You

believed you were right and that I was wrong, and again you stood to your right and left me to the consequences of my error. You would not stop for what you could not understand; and that to me is one of life's greatest tests: to live in the light of all that you see and to let the unseen take care of itself. I suppose people go to pieces many a time over things in others that they cannot understand. Then once more the book began to fail, and I knew I could help you and you would not permit me to help. You threw it back upon yourself to know your work as well as I knew it, as well as any one could know it. You would not receive from me a single suggestion, even to save the book from being a failure. That was another test,—a man's mastery of what he sets out to do: it is perfectly true that if he cannot do his work, no one else can do it for him. And then the last test of all! The end of the book was like an arraignment of me; it was like a judgment passed on me for my own traits of character; and you came to read it to me at a moment when you most desired to inflict no wound, to make me happy and to win me. But you adhered to the

true course of your story: you stood by the heroine there and not by the heroine here. And I liked you best of all for that. If you had changed your work at its finish with any thought of me, you would have lowered yourself at the very instant when I wanted to see you highest."

A long silence fell on us. She broke it with one of those humorous transitions which mark the equipoise of her character, its breadth, its balance :—

"Of course I should not speak of these things were it not about a piece of my own property. I am merely discussing my own property; and it is a misfortune that the piece of property happens to be conscious and is obliged to overhear what is said."

The piece of property did not object to being conscious, even though wooden. Still, to him the mystery had not wholly disappeared; one darkest spot yet remained :—

"All this is very well as far as it goes. But the very heart of the trouble has not yet been reached: everything is now clear enough as regards me. But as to yourself: *what was the unknown trouble?* What was it that you refused

to explain? I have always believed that it related to the heroine of the story."

"It did relate to her."

"But in what way?"

"I objected to the presence of such a heroine in a story."

"But why?"

"Because *I* was the heroine."

I turned to her with blank stupefaction :—

"How could you possibly be the heroine of a story laid in the time of my grandmother—three-quarters of a century ago—in an old Southern seminary, nearly a thousand miles away?"

"You transported me in time and place—that is all."

I pondered this new difficulty :—

"If I had written a story about Helen of Troy, would you have supposed yourself the heroine of that?"

"It would have been my only chance to be Helen of Troy."

"Do you possibly think yourself the heroine of the next book I am going to write—of the one that I have not yet imagined?"

"There is not a doubt of it."

"Do you expect to be the heroine of all the rest of them that I am to write?"

"I do."

"You mean that I have not only married you, but I am actually the husband of all my own heroines?"

"What a lucky husband!"

"But you seem to glory in it, to demand it as a right."

"I should not wonder."

"And so you began by being offended at the idea of being the first heroine and you conclude by exacting that you be all the heroines."

"Let any other woman dare!"

"And so whatever I may write, it will always be of you?"

"Did you not yourself once send me a Book of the Year made up of daily stories; and did you not then say that I was in every story, that you always displaced the actor in each and put me in the actor's place? Alas for the vows of the young lover when they are translated into the deeds of a young husband! You have already forgotten!"

I went back over this whole troublous field and uttered my protest :—

"But this leaves me at my wit's end. The inconsistency of it all! What are you going to do about the inconsistency?"

She was radiant with enjoyment of the situation. There was almost the taunt of coquetry in her, for though as a girl she had revealed no touch of coquetry, as a young wife she was full of it. She now appeared to have brought the issue to a quarter of the battlefield where she was sure of victory :—

"I am not going to do anything about the inconsistency! That is the beauty of inconsistency—that if you try to change it, you destroy it. What would life be without it? We might as well be bees, doomed to make only wax and fill it for ever with honey. But only bees can abide with wax and honey. True, they fight, but then it must be when one consistency runs against another consistency : it is a fight between two consistencies, each bent upon being consistent. In human life we make room for inconsistency!"

"That is a very fine theory of cloying sweet-

ness for wives," I said, "but I wonder how it would work out in practice for husbands. Would this scheme allow room for husbands?"

"Ample room! Ample or not, it is the only scheme for us to work with."

She was laughing at me. She reigned absolute on the throne of woman's inconsistency, and even struck me on the head with her sceptre. After a few moments of reflection I wondered whether I might cast an instantaneous shadow on that luminous nature for the sake of withdrawing the shadow and showing a steady light shining behind; might I be unkind for a moment, to demonstrate the nature of kindness? Slowly, as though the words were torn from me with reluctance, I said :—

"What you have told me now brushes the mystery away: it is all clear light in whatsoever direction I look. That is your side. On my side there is something that you have never suspected. With you it has been an explanation, with me it will have to be—a confession."

That word fell as a chill on the twilight of the garden. It seemed to come out of darkness, to be a messenger of night, of things not

seen. I said nothing more. I gave the evil charm time to work. The silence grew more intense, and I would not break it. At last I heard her voice at a greater distance from my ear—for she had moved away from me :—

"What is—the confession ?"

I made no reply. I could feel fear taking possession of her. She said again in such a voice as I could not have believed to be hers :—

"I am waiting to hear."

But I kept silent and turned away from her on the seat. She sprang up and came around on the other side of me and sat close that her eyes might read my features through the gloom. And again her tones, now tremulous, broken with dread and anguish :—

"I will know !"

I began, moving away from her and turning my face off :—

"Then you shall know. The day you left me to go to Europe, you remember that you left me rejected, dismissed—without reason. And I am human. It was more than I could endure. And I found another. And it was

she who that long summer shared my loneliness. It was she who smiled, she who cheered me when I was discouraged and rested me when I was worn out. You have insisted that there was a heroine in that story. There was none in the sense you mean. There was one in the sense I mean : and you were not that heroine, she was the heroine. When I married you, I was false enough to forget her. Now, I begin to remember her again. That is my confession."

I leaned over and looked into her face : it was white with terror. For a while she sat quite still, gazing simply out into the night. An incredible transformation had taken place in her : her face became the face of her girlhood : marriage had dropped away from her ; she had repudiated it and me and her child ; she was back in her girlhood, having fled from the present to the safety of her past.

Then without a word she suddenly started up and slipped swiftly away through the twilight and her white figure disappeared across the yard : unconsciously she took the direction that led her out of her father's home through the servants' gate : the difference between

servant and mistress had been blotted out to her in her stricken humanity.

I followed and found her at home, lying face downward on her couch—it had been the couch of her girlhood—wounded beyond her strength to bear, cold and shuddering.

I lifted her, and, supporting her, led her into another room where I had stored some bachelor belongings.

And there, taking down that image of herself from which all her mistakes and weaknesses had been refined away, leaving only those traits of her nature which I had always held to and which I believed would never fail me, I unveiled for her, hidden in the white mists of her scarf, the heroine in bronze.

THE END

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